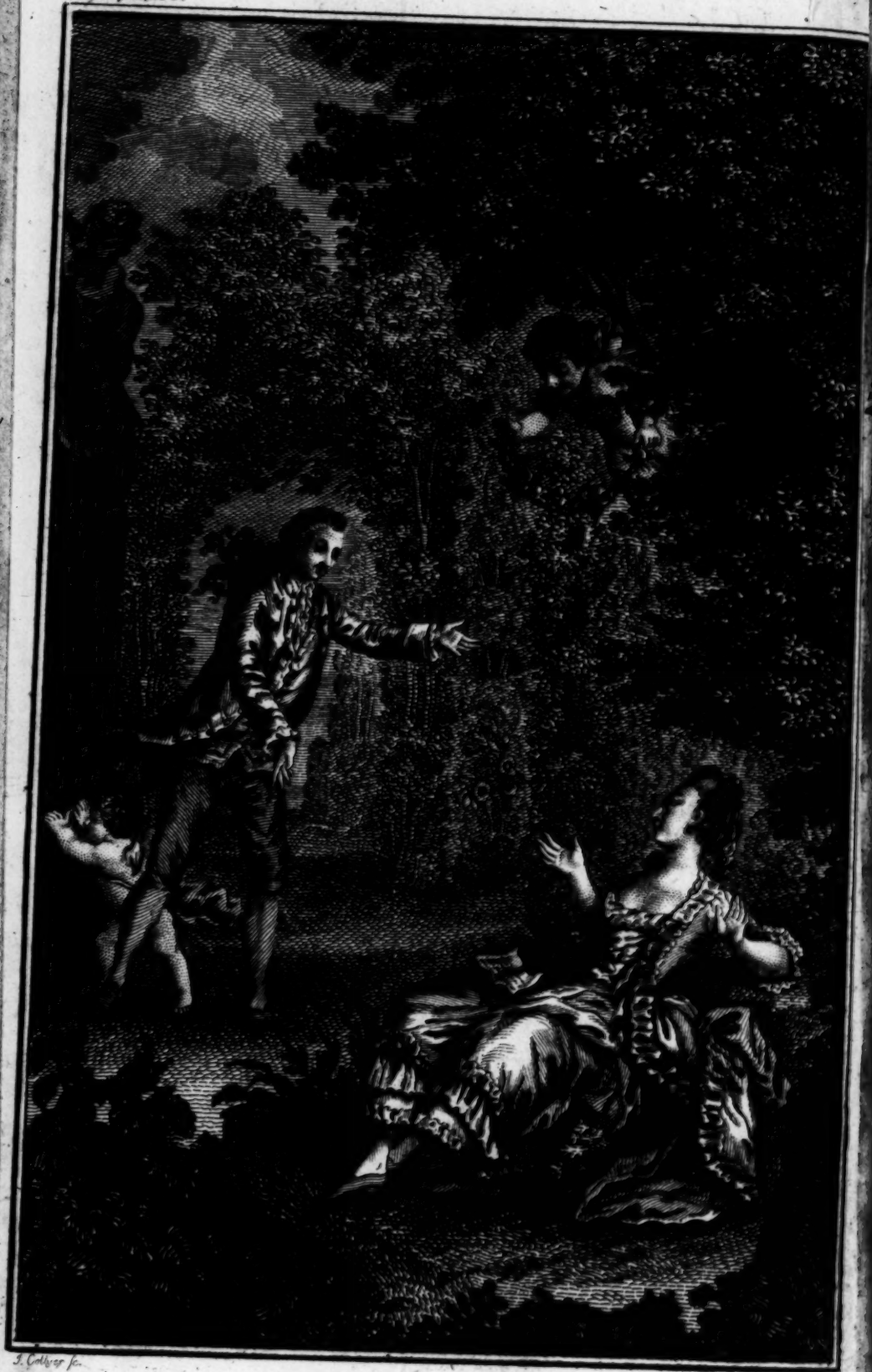
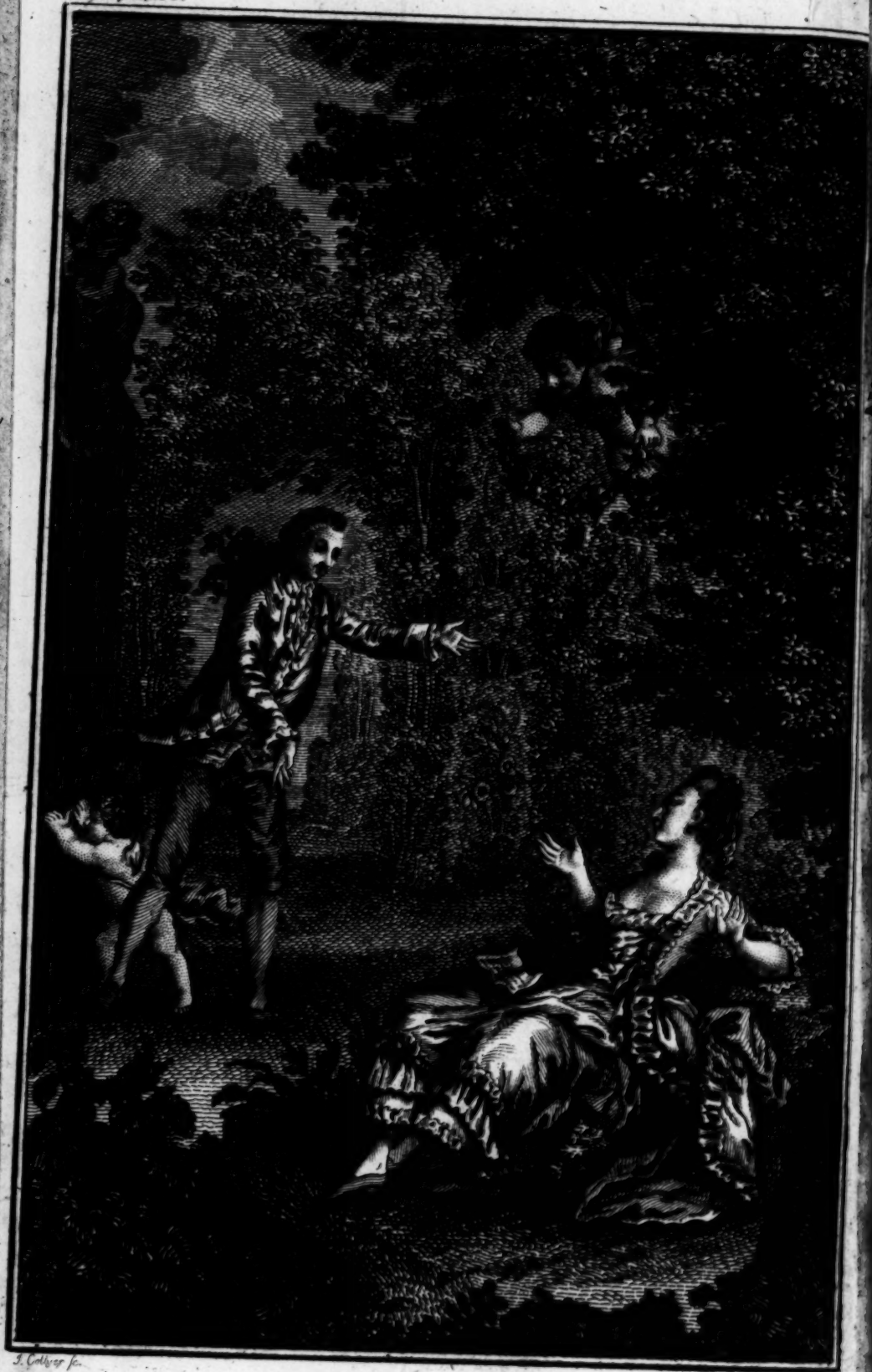






T H E
F A T A L E F F E C T S
O F
I N C O N S T A N C Y;
O R,
L E T T E R S
O F T H E
M A R C H I O N E S S D E S Y R C È,
T h e C O U N T D E M I R B E E L E,
A N D O T H E R S.

T R A N S L A T E D F R O M T H E F R E N C H.

I N T W O V O L U M E S,

V O L. I.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. Baw, No. 28, Pater-Noster-Row.
M.DCC.LXXIV.





P R E F A C E.

IN framing the Letters of *Madame de Senanges**, I endeavoured to prove that love and duty are not always incompatible. The design of this writing is quite the contrary, and, perhaps, may not be found the less interesting. The foibles of a well-disposed mind bring on misfortunes, give offence to prejudices, but do not always annihilate virtue. I hope that this maxim, which may, indeed, be questioned, but which may be better defended, will appear rational, after the reading of these volumes.

THE woman who yields, is often more courageous than she who resists; she sacrifices herself, condemns herself to fears, to alarms, hides her tears,

* A former work, published by the same Author.

iv P R E F A C E.

conceals her suspicions, risks every thing, and rejoices in nothing, but the happiness of her lover. I shall not enter, here, into any detail upon this subject; the Public will judge impartially, both of the motive and the execution of this work.

I HAVE followed the principles I had myself formed upon writings of this nature. I have described characters, I have given them passions; I have had experience, and I sat down to digest my observations. The reader will not here meet with any intricate construction of events, or any manner of episode to interrupt the principal action. The moral, as far as I was able to effect it, is founded in the story itself. By this means, only, it can truly operate; while displayed with the pomp of document, it but scares the pupil, and too generally misses of its effect.

P R E F A C E. ▼

ONE gives us a series of small memoirs, copied from the manners and complexion of the times, without the least tint of nature throughout the piece; another plunges himself into a complication of incidents, suffers himself to be carried away by the transports of an extravagant imagination, and collects together an heap of improbabilities; and then both sit down perfectly satisfied with the notion of their having framed a Novel. Perhaps, too, I may fail in the attempt, as much as both of these; but all I pretend to answer for, is, that I shall not follow either of their examples.

WHEN our reason acquiesces not, our hearts are not fairly won; they are but taken by surprize, and the possession is not long tenable. My principal aim was to speak the truth of things; to present only possible events; to exhibit to the view of my readers only

vi P R E F A C E.

a small corner of the great chart of human nature, which lies open to their observation, every day, as they pass through life; and to render the inspection useful to them, by cloathing the instruction in all the charms of sensibility. We reject not the lesson which insinuates itself through our tears; it makes its own way, and penetrates the bosom, without even a consciousness of the mind, which the heart, for the time, suffers to doze in its own philosophy, in order to have the pleasure all its own.

I HAVE drawn the Duke one of that species of men, who have erected debauchery into a system, and foppery into a science; who despise women, are at once their passion and their scourge, amuse their minds, set no value on their hearts, use stratagem to gain them, abandon them without remorse, and cover their artful schemes
under

P R E F A C E. vii

under a certain fictitious gaiety, which imposes on the world, because that life is full of blockheads to be cheated, and fools to be beguiled.

THE Count has no plan in his amours; he is a giddy young man, without any knowledge of the world. The Duke reasons, deduces consequences, and acts according to his maxims; and is a master of arts in that mystery, where the other is but a novice. The latter is a weak person, without any marked character*; the former, an accomplished villain. Models of both these descriptions are common enough to be met with, every where.

* I THINK that the French writer has done injustice, here, to a character of his own drawing. Count Mirbelle, from his youth and inexperience, is naturally rendered the dupe of artful villainy, but is a man of spirit, honour, and sentiment, throughout.

TRANSLATOR.

viii P R E F A C E.

As to the stile of this writing, I have attended to it as much as the nature of such a work could admit of, and have particularly endeavoured to avoid some of the objections which had been made to the Letters of *Madame de Senanges*.

THIS article, so much neglected by modern authors, is, however, (one cannot too often repeat it) that which insures to the fruits of our studies the approbation of all times. It is very surprizing that, though surrounded with perfect models of imitation in this excellence, we should have so few writers, of late, capable of interesting their readers; who understand those innumerable niceties, those harmonious combinations, that *metaphysic* of words, as it may be stiled, which distinguish the author of *BRITANNICUS*, or seem to be acquainted even with the
mere

P R E F A C E. ix

mere mechanism of the language, its first or most simple elements.

BEFORE this beauty of diction had been brought to its present perfection, prior to the *Fenelons*, the *Bassnets*, the *Boileaus*, the *La Bruyeres*, *Monsieur Pascal* wrote his Provincial Letters; he seems to have written by inspiration, in the dialect of a purer age, and we are not able to imitate him, even in the present one.

MAY not this almost general depravation owe its source to the madness that has possessed us, for some time past, of attempting to think too deeply? to that epidemical affectation, which without investigating the true nature of things burlesques our ideas, impresses them with forms more strange than new, gives to our style a constraint and bombast, destroys all its *naïveté*, its graces, its warmth, renders
it

x P R E F A C E.

it stiff and cold, drains it of all its moisture, and becomes to our language what the quaint and mincing diction of Seneca, the moralist, was to the elegant flow of the Latin eloquence.

ANOTHER reason of the degenerate taste we manifest, in this particular, perhaps may also arise from the too great easiness of the Public with regard to our compositions; especially their indulgence to certain barbarous dramatic productions, which, by the assistance of some events, though ill conducted, the witchcraft of scenery, and the good performance of the actors, have usurped our applauses for the moment.

WHEN the judges are not difficult to be pleased, the writers will soon cease to be so. The perfecting our taste is a slow work, and we soon grow tired of it. A vaporous and gloomy brain

P R E F A C E. xi

brain engenders, without much labour, a whole litter of dismal ditties; it rejoices over its brood, and besotted with the monstrous creation, never takes the trouble of licking it into form.

THE Theatre ought to be a bulwark to the purity of language. When that degrades itself, the contagion soon infects the other parts of Literature *. 'Tis natural to aspire to that fame

* It is certain, that Dramatic Writers have a greater influence, than is generally imagined, upon the perfection or composition of a language. *Racine* has, perhaps, contributed more to the improvement of ours, than all the Writers of our *Augustan* period put together. 'Tis from the Theatre that they speak directly to the nation. 'Tis that tribunal, more especially, which gives the laws of expression, decides between different readings, and impedes literature, or assists its progress.—This is not to be taken for a digression, as it flows naturally from the subject I am here treating of.

which

xii P R E F A C E.

which is the easiest purchased; one finds that the nation bestows its admiration upon mishapen works, where a few beauties are confusedly interspersed; Indolence throws out this bait, the brain ferments, brings forth its chimæras; and Vanity stunned with inconsiderate applause, becomes deaf to the sober opinion of the critics. From hence proceeds that deluge of writings, which have overflowed our reason. An art runs wild that is not restrained by rules; and the laurel can never be deemed glorious, when no exertions are required to gain it.

THE versification of *Phædra* cost *Racine* the intire labour of two years. In about six weeks one might, after some manner or other, arrange a parcel of pompous extravagances, frame a tragedy in the dismal strain, supply the want of eloquence by machinery,
stick

stick a few *faux-brillans* in mournful heroics, be very fierce, very lamentable, very sepulchral,—in a word, succeed.

BUT when one would produce a work pure, elegant, noble without emphasis, energetic without hardness, harmonious without bombast; when one would display the richness of a dialogue full, easy, and concise; conceal with art the clue of an imposition, which prepares every thing; without shewing any thing; graduate the passions, develop the characters; vary, by the change of situations and contrasts, an interest which fatigues not, though still the same: when one would employ only those means which serve to forward the fable, suppress whatever but retards the action, not heap into one act the business of five, make the piece glide into the heart, without painting

xiv P R E F A C E.

painting it to the eye, oppress not the
soul with terror, but to relieve it by
tears; when, in fine, one would en-
deavour at once to satisfy our sensi-
bility, our taste, and judgment, 'tis
then that the success must cost us
years, and that years shall never wear
away our success.

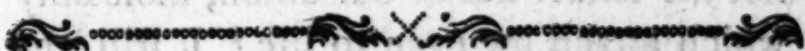


THE





T H E
F A T A L E F F E C T S
O F
I N C O N S T A N C Y.



L E T T E R I.

From Lady SIDLEY,

To the Count MIRBELLE.

A League from Paris.



O U asked me, yesterday, from whence arose my sadness, and whether I had any reason to be displeased with you. I can scarce persuade myself that *you* could have asked me such a question, or indeed that such a one could be addressed to *me*. You know that I am naturally grave; a series of misfortunes, which assailed me

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B

even

2 THE FATAL EFFECTS OF

even in my tenderest infancy, has diffused an air of melancholy over my countenance; but the expression is involuntary, and of course without a meaning; nor will I permit you to misinterpret it.

CAN I be distressed, or afflicted, when with thee! while I enjoy thy presence, and read my happiness in thine eyes? Have I another good on earth, but thee? and are not the tender ties of our union, those only which attach me even to life? I still endure it—I yet subsist. Let this convince you how dear you are to me.

THE weakness of your passion only can induce you to doubt the strength of mine. You ask me if I have any reason to complain of you? Ought you to think, or fear, that I have any? Has your conduct justified that apprehension?

ATTEND to me—Providence seems to have marked my existence by sufferings, only, and endowed me with fortitude, merely to enable me to struggle with misfortunes. Married but six months, the happiest



happiest union was dissolved by the death of a husband, whom I most tenderly loved. I saw my virtuous and respectable father fall a sacrifice to the virulence of Party rage. I saw him expire within my fainting arms, whilst even his gaolers wept his fate.

My first tears flowed in a prison, for the miseries of a parent whose virtues merited a throne. My mother still was left me ; a mother whom I almost worshipped ; who shared in all my sorrows, and mingled her widow tears with mine. I have lost her, too ; you were present at her death. With her last sigh she formed and blessed our union—I have now nought left within this world, but thee.

Our hymeneal torch was lighted on a tomb—Hymen, for ever sacred, though wanting the sanction of the laws, and not confirmed before our altars ! I am far from blushing at my weakness, or wishing to reclaim those rights, which I have given you over my fond heart. I cannot confine myself within those formal precepts, by

which ordinary souls are bounded ; and even in thy arms I dare invoke the Supreme Being as a witness of my innocence, and offer him thy happiness as a security for my own virtue.

FEAR not, then, that I shall ever render you uneasy, by betraying fears or impatience that would debase us both. I am wholly thine, even to my latest breath. I cherish my *affection*, as 'tis by this only I would be attached to you, and desire no other tie over you than *yours*. You are dependent on your family—you have duties to fulfil—observe them all. I would wish my idea to be ever present to your thoughts, but never to become an obstacle to your actions.

LEARN to know the soul of an Englishwoman. My heart rests secure in itself, for security is the fruit of esteem. If I could suspect you, for a moment, that moment would imbitter all my days. The calm which I now enjoy, is but the repose of the strongest sensibility ; if a storm were to succeed, it would be horrible.

O, MY

INCONSTANCY. 5

O, my friend ! what Barbarian would labour to destroy the happiness he has himself conferred ? You have created a new world for me, and placed me in what part of it you pleased ; where I remain, in perfect acquiescence, without regretting any thing else. This garden, these flowers, which I fondly cultivate ; these shady arbours which conceal us from enquiring eyes ;—these are my treasures—I despise all others, and disdain every thing, that is not *Thee*. I am enchanted with my solitude ; when you appear, my pleasures are compleat ; and even in your absence, your idea can replace them. Solely occupied by that, the smile of happiness sits on my lips ; I consecrate every moment of the day, at night it mixes with my dreams, and I wake with joy to think on it again. I congratulate myself on knowing, loving, and existing but for you, and on living at the gates of Paris, insensible to its tumultuous pleasures.

Would you change the happiness I owe to you alone, into an everlasting sorrow, or drown those eyes in tears, which you

6 THE ILL EFFECTS OF

now fill with love? No; I have not, nor ever shall have, reason to reproach you—my pride will not suffer me to fear a rival; for where is the woman that can love like me? Adieu! I expect you at your return from ——. I have re-read Clarissa, for the third time — how I pity her misfortunes! But wherefore has your last absence been longer than usual?

I KNOW not how to quit you—but,
Adieu!



L E T T E R II.

From the Duke of ***

To the Marchioness de SYRCE.

WITHIN this fortnight, Madam, I have made the most profound reflections. Your conduct towards me, and the unabated rigour with which you have repaid my sincere and constant passion, might naturally have been supposed to leave some secret venom rankling at my heart, and have made resentment succeed to surprise—but I feel no such sentiment.

There

There is something in your character, I know not what, that has the power of disarming me. I have formed my resolution; it is violent, but steady. I sacrifice myself to your caprice, or to your reason, if you chuse that term; and since you are averse from love, I consent, for your sake, to sink into the languor and insipidity of friendship.

THIS is the first time that I ever thought of accepting such moderate terms, from a woman of your youth, beauty, and accomplishments. The sacrifice is painful—I know it—No matter, I submit—And this new homage ought to be considered to be the more extraordinary, as I am the man in the world, perhaps, who most sensibly feels the mortification of a disappointment. Behold me, then, your Friend! What a singular title! I fear you will find me a little awkward, on my first setting out. There is something alarming in attempting a part one has never performed; but time reconciles us to every thing;—when we are used to it, for ten or a dozen years, it will become quite easy, for the rest

of our lives. I hope you will allow that you have got off upon very reasonable terms. I am not so dangerous as many women would have me thought—let them but ask you, and I doubt not but you will kindly undeceive them, and vindicate me from a character I so little deserve.

WELL! have you yet a bad opinion of me? and will you inhumanly refuse me the confidence I claim? I have bought it dear enough to be covetous of it. A man, to be upon any terms with a woman, must possess her heart, her esteem, or her secret. I think I need not fear being taxed with presumption, when I only claim a confidence of the latter from you.

You are perfectly sensible that your resistance may be attributed to various motives, and even perverseness might perhaps claim a share. Women (I speak philosophically, and generally) are by no means capable of that disinterested heroism, that severe fortitude, that rejects our addresses, and resents our solicitations. These gigantic efforts are very far beyond them; they
are

are not the dupes of Stoicism, believe me — our reason may deceive us, but instinct is their guide; and their defence, I fancy, depends oftener upon foreign alliances, than their own forces. And whenever they reject the addresses of a man who knows how to attack them, is it not because they have already surrendered themselves to a *weakness* that lends them *strength* to resist, while the merit of their denial is imputed to higher principles? And whenever a woman rejects a triumph, is it not to be presumed, at least, that she has some private indemnity in reserve, to console her for her public sacrifice? These are but doubts I propose; for I myself believe most stedfastly in virtue — But there are certain Infidels (one sometimes sees monsters) who would imagine they discovered, in my defeat, the certain proof of another's success *.

* SUCH is the artful and insidious manner of arguing, with all libertine wits; but 'tis certainly most unphilosophic. They seem to speak of Women, not only as of a different gender, but of a different species, too, from Men. There is no distinction of sexes in virtue or vice; and whatever has been once

TO THE ILL EFFECTS OF

AND now, Madam, if your affections happen to be pre-engaged, for all things are possible, who shall pretend to condemn the true celestial union of our souls, or restrain their innocent effusions?—To dissemble with a lover is usual, and perhaps necessary—Women have a kind of policy upon this article, as reputable as ancient.—But the friend, I like to think so, reigns over a heart without disguise; he is admitted into its most secret thoughts, and sees clearly through all the complication of motives, the decency of appearances, and the reserves of coquetry.

Such, Madam, is the province to which I now limit my pretensions—It is but common justice in you to accord it—and the more parsimonious you are of your *favours*, the more prodigal you ought to be of your *confidence*. You may rely up-

determined to be the point of honour, in man or woman, will be equally defended, by each. Many Men have been brave, from principle, who were timid, by nature; and why should the like spirit of resolution, be so partially denied to Women?

TRANSLATOR.

on

on my discretion—I offer you the same portion of it I should have used as a successful lover, under another title, notwithstanding the insipidity of the character, and the difference of the rewards.

How worthy of envy will be that happy mortal, whom you shall distinguish by a preference!—But the oftener I look round your circle of admirers, I find myself still more at a loss, on whom to fix my suspicions. It cannot possibly be the great Colonel!—Or, who knows but you may have been struck by his horse-like shape, his absurd prodigality, his odious tottering gait, his ridiculous importance, or his profound erudition, upon the article of *etiquettes*?

As for the little Prince of ———, he has youth and freshness; and that kind of *native* simplicity, which in men sometimes degenerates into sentiment:—besides, he is endowed with the most agreeable stutter, and sometimes that is sufficient to turn the scale, in favour of the

stam-

stammerer; for an hesitation of speech has so much the appearance of that confusion which arises from a respectful love, that, though the little prince is an hour getting out a sentence, there may, perhaps, be a sort of eloquence in his hesitation, which cannot fail of making him amends.

I do not talk to you of the Count de Mirbelle. — I have even formerly refused to introduce him to you. — I don't like such offices, as I know full well the many complaints and reproaches, one draws upon themselves, by taking upon them to introduce such young men into life; and therefore, if you should have any reason to be displeased with him, I shall not have the mortification of being the cause of your dissatisfaction. For, tho' he has a thousand agreeable accomplishments, and even some excellent qualities, I don't think he is the kind of man, that could succeed in pleasing you — He is too much admired, too much followed! — A man, so universally received, is not the person that could engage your heart. I know

know you better than you imagine, and very sincerely approve the propriety of your sentiments.

ADIEU, Madam! I purpose paying my respects to you, soon, and entering upon the serious offices of my department. If you honour me with a line, in answer, it may serve to lead me into the stile of friendship, and rid me of that embarrassment, which an unfortunate person must feel, who has not yet had the advantages of being initiated into the mysteries of so seraphic a sentiment.

I am, &c.



L E T T E R III.

From the Marchioness of SYREX

To the Duke of —

I CONFESS to you, my Lord Duke, that your letter has amused me, vastly; but wherefore was it not written by your own hand?—But for your page, I should have been quite at a loss for the author, and could only have discovered
you.

you by the vivacity of your railery, or your amazing prudence. Yes, yes, you were afraid, had you written yourself, of leaving a proof in my hands, which might bear witness against you, in favour of my conduct; but, thank Heaven, you know as little of my heart, as of my character.—My own integrity is sufficient for me, and I have no need of foreign aids to defend it.—Say and do every thing you please, against me, I forgive you, beforehand, and you need not fear that I shall ever take the trouble to vindicate myself.

I AM quite delighted with that kind of stile, in which you have written to me now; it is infinitely superior to your love-letters: for in displaying of that passion, you become awkward, by the meer force of too much address.—You are, by much, too knowing for me.—The true science of a lover, is to speak from his feelings, not to seek for correct expressions; to be perfectly sincere, to surrender himself entirely up to his passion, and to paint his sentiments, without the smallest touch of art.—

A flow

A flow of words will never atone for the dryness of the heart; and if we are not caught by the emotion, we are always armed against the design.—A sigh, a tear, an expressive silence, is more powerful with us, than all the vain parade of gallantry, with which only such women have been seduced, as were scarce worth the gaining.

YOUR expressions of love, seem but like the recollection of a former passion, impressed on a refined understanding; and I am transported at finding you return to your natural stile. You are sublime, in irony—even I, who have been the object of it, allow your superiority in that species of writing. I have but one thing to object to you, on this occasion, which is the not having been able to conceal the pique which torments you, under more artful expressions.

SERIOUSLY, you are exasperated that I had penetration enough not to become the dupe of a passion, which you never felt—I have robbed you of the pleasure
of

of deceiving me. This cries aloud for vengeance; and I cannot conceive it possible, that after my treating you so abominably, you can have the goodness to offer me your friendship *de bon cœur*. What! you become my friend! The Platonic of a woman of twenty, and still surrounded by flatterers, at least! Reflect upon the mortifying inference to be deduced from so humble a concession, I beseech your Grace.

UNLUCKILY, too, I am so unfortunate as not to have a secret, worth confiding. Attend to this. After having been a lover, without consequence, you run the hazard of becoming a friend, without employ.—This would be multiplying disgrace on you, and must certainly end in your hating me most mortally; and where, alas! shall I find the means of consolation, for such a misfortune?

I AM quite aware of your incredulity; you will never be persuaded that a woman, at my years, who leads a life of such dissipation, is not under the necessity of giving

giving ease to her heart, by reposing a confidence in the indulgent bosom of friendship. But you have yet only met with women of intrigue. Such, indeed, may have much to tell, and much more to conceal; but allow me to say, that it is not fair to judge of the whole Sex, by general ideas. Such resistless cavaliers, as you affect to be deemed, are curious philosophers: Because half a dozen silly women, who have neither prudence nor decency, tender by instinct, and libertine through habit; because such women, I say, accept, and quit ye, re-accept and re-quit ye again; because the notoriousness of your perfidies and their own misconduct have equally consigned them to that infamy which they dare brave, you presume to comprehend us all under such stigmatized exceptions.

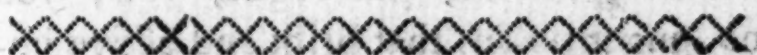
BUT learn from me, my Lord, and remember it, if you can, that there are yet in the world, estimable women, whose charms merit your homage, and whose manners challenge your respect. Of the
first

first class, are those who combat their inclinations, and triumph over them. The others, with less fortitude, or more sensibility, have yet continued to render even their weakness respectable, by elevating their passion to a sublime sentiment, and by never forfeiting that innate chastity of the soul, or that blushing modesty, which, even in their failures, seem but sacrifices offered up to Virtue.

My stars forgive me ! have I been reasoning ? I am sure you as little expected, as I swear I designed it. Adieu, my Lord ! you are really more susceptible of friendship, than one would think ; but I desire only one proof of yours. Shew more indulgence to the friends of my circle ; believe me, that a turn for ridicule, is not a character to be vain of. Notwithstanding the giddiness of my manners, I am steady in my attachments ; I must therefore make a compromise for my friends, in this article. I shall most freely forgive all your ingenious sarcasms, provided they are only pointed at myself ; as I have the vanity to think

think myself responsible for your wit, though I confess myself a bankrupt, with regard to your love.

P. S. I know that many women in my situation, would not have written to you on the subject of yours; but it is my humour, and I do not apprehend the least danger in indulging it.



L E T T E R IV.

From the Duke of —

To the Sieur LE BLANC.

WELL, Mr. Le Blanc! what is become of the enterprize I gave you in charge? Have your scouts surrounded the camp? May we hope to conquer this redoubted British Beauty? You must contrive to get intelligence, from within and without; post your Argus's; pay well your spies; bribe her valets; and make use of those arts of seduction, which you so amply possess, to gain her women. Become once master of her secret, and you hold her at discretion. Scatter gold, by hand.

handfuls ; you shall not want the means ; one should be prodigal upon such occasions, and you know that I am grateful to those who serve me well. But above all, take care to guard my secret——If our attempt should fail, I would not suffer the disgrace of being foiled. By no means name either Mirbelle or me.

You grow old, you rogue, you ; you no longer possess that brisk and active impudence, which characterised your youth. You repose too much under the shade of your laurels. I heard a ridiculous thing of you, yesterday—that you begin to feel compunctions. What, the plague, ails the man ? Have you been scared by ghosts ? But make an end of my business, and you may turn moralist afterwards, as soon as you please. I need your assistance and address, for the present, and pay dear enough, in conscience, for the postponing your repentance to the future.

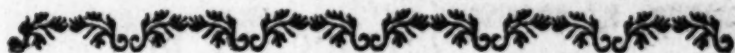
I EXPECT to hear from you, quickly ; and that you will serve me rather better than you did with the little Opera girl—But
for

INCONSTANCY. 21

for the slowness of your motions I might have had her a fortnight sooner.

ZEAL, zeal, Mr. Le Blanc ! this adventure may do you an infinite deal of honor. We shall see if you have yet a passion for glory, by your being still capable of emulation.

Adieu !



LETTER V.

From the Duke of ———

To the Count MIRBELLE.

I SOUGHT you, yesterday, in vain, my little Cousin, at above twenty places. I then went to the Play-house, but you were not there—nor did I see the Marchioness ; which makes me imagine that ye were both engaged in adjusting your preliminaries. Try to abridge them, as much as possible, and avoid remaining a long eternity in the dull uniformity of the same attitude.

WE

WE would all be happy—to which variety is requisite. This is the maxim of women—it ought also to be ours. Remember the rule I have so often laid down to you in such affairs. One should hurry on the conquest of your slow-paced fair one, and only temporize with those that are too lively. Impatience becomes your age. Be delicate in your address, but brisk in your action. This is the whole art of gallantry, at twenty.

I HAVE reflected upon your passion for the fair Briton, and see plainly that it is nothing more than an attachment formed by habit; you have had time enough to grow tired of it, already—I advise you to think seriously about it. An intrigue of this kind may injure your advancement in life, must interfere with your pleasures, and prevent your success, in twenty adventures that may be each more brilliant than the former; besides that it will spread such a varnish of stupid constancy over your character, as may render you despicable in the eyes of women. They think no man faithful to one mistress,
but

but for want of merit to succeed with another.

If you would not break with her abruptly (though a punctilio of this kind is but a sort of sentimental foible) begin by lessening the number and frequency of your visits, and so prepare her by degrees, since you have not spirit enough to forsake her, at once. Emancipate yourself from this British yoke, if it were only from a national zeal, and spirit of patriotism; for of what nature can your engagements with her be? Pleasure is the only tie I know of, with the Sex; and when we begin to find it pall, our attachments cease, of course. Fortify yourself with these principles.

I go, to-morrow, to St. Hubert's; if you write an answer to this, order your letter to be brought early to me there, and relieve the anxiety I feel upon your account.

I HAVE broken off with my Opera girl; I gave her up to the Prince of ***, who won,

won, this day, a thousand guineas, a *Vingt-un*. I got shut of a plague, and obliged them both. Do the same with your Englishwoman, and rely upon my friendship.



LETTER VI.

From the *Sieur LE BLANC*

To the Duke of —.

I DARE not appear before your Grace; I have already exhausted all the resources of my art, without being able to promise you the least hope of success. This Englishwoman's house is a kind of fortress, inaccessible to all our approaches. Her men don't understand French, and her maids are discreet and sensible. There is an air of virtue runs through the whole family, which does not encourage the smallest hope, for carrying on our project. To compleat our defeat, she is guarded by a great English mastiff, too, who seems to have taken a particular dislike to my emissaries. This very day, he was near devouring one of them, who
had

had disguised himself like a pedlar — one would almost imagine that this Hesperian dragon had been aware of our intentions.

I HAVE, however, very nearly expended the fund that your Grace intrusted to my management; it has been chiefly dissipated in small expences; and I see, with grief, that we shall be foiled in this great enterprise — Yet I flatter myself that your Grace will not accuse me of the slightest negligence. As for the remorse you rally me upon, I am too much a philosopher to give way to such a weakness; so that you may be perfectly easy upon that article, as I trust that I shall finish my course as I began it. The Age I live in has treated me too kindly to permit my being ungrateful; and if Heaven spares me life, I shall grow grey in a profession, which, while it ensures the pleasures of my worthy friends, enriches the professor. I am, with these sentiments, and the most profound respect,

Your Grace's, &c.

LETTER VII.

From the Duke DE VILLENEUVE *

To the Viscount DE LORME.

WELL, my dear Viscount! how does the fine climate of Italy agree with you? Amidst all the master-works of Art which are scattered over that precious soil, and surrounded by the noblest monuments of antiquity (for which a man of your refinement must have more taste than a block-headed Artist, who travels merely in his profession), do you regret our Paris, our public sports, our *petits scupés*, which are only enlivened by buffoonery and grimace, that extreme degree of corruption at which we are arrived, our privileged galantries, our scandalous anecdotes, the insolent pride of our chaste women, and the affected prudery of our frail ones?

THOUGH yet young myself, you are still more so. I have had a good deal of expe-

* Since the first Sheet has been worked off at the Press, the Translator has thought proper to fill up the blanks of Names, in the French; which should be always done, where there is no private history to be concealed. A Reader cannot so well become acquainted with, or be interested about, anonymous persons.

rience—I love you—and before I acquaint you with the great secrets I am going to confide in you, I intend to give you a little previous lecture.

I BEGAN to live in the world from my earliest years; I was naturally of a warm constitution, an active mind, had an immoderate love of pleasure, and possessed all the means to obtain it.

THANKS to these happy circumstances, I have seen, enjoyed, and searched into the nature of every thing (the expression is not too strong, believe me); and even by the multiplicity of my sensations have I acquired a fund of knowledge which is peculiar to myself alone, and totally unlike those precarious hypotheses which pedants deduce from observations on the minds of others. The finer impressions are blunted by the dulness of study; and your mere scholar grows more and more stupid, every day.

As the memory becomes loaded, the imagination grows languid; and the fire of genius, is extinguished by the ice of reflection.

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fection. They puzzle their heads, with dates, with facts, or a parcel of idle fictions—by chance they may discover some few truths, which had lain smothered beneath a thousand falsehoods; and thus by dwelling upon Ages past, they suffer the present to escape them.

THEY analyse the government of Lycurgus, the laws of Solon, and the old-fashioned Code of Confucius, while they remain compleatly ignorant of the politics or manners of their own Times. They speak familiarly on the academic groves of the Leontium's, the Flora's, and the Aspasia's *, of Athens; but how awkward and uncouth, when they happen to be admitted into the drawing-room of a pretty woman of the eighteenth century!—I prefer my cotemporaries. It is with them, and of them, that I would wish to learn; all the rest is but chimerical uncertainty and folly. I have purposely dwelt upon this exordium, the better to prepare you for the moral which is to ensue.

* Three Grecian women, equally famous, and infamous, for their wit, beauty, and intrigue.

TRIFLER as you are, I do not wish you to plunge into the depths of meditation ; they are not suited either to your age or station ; but I would have you see a great deal, and profit by your observation. It will cost you only a little notice and attention ; and every reflection you make, will enrich your mind, without fatiguing it, or otherwise interfering with your pleasures.

DURING your residence in Italy, you may, with great ease to yourself, gather in the useful harvest which that rich country yields, which once produced a race of heroes, was formerly the cradle of Arts, and is now become the seat of modern politics. You need not kiss the Pope's slipper—I could hardly pardon you such a superstition ; but you may inform yourself of his state and power. You should also learn the manners of the people ; I mean of those that are called *the best company*. There is a peculiar species of these, in every country ; and it is from them alone, that persons of your rank are to learn all that is worth knowing.

You may laugh at the Monsignors there, and galant with their wives—Use your freedom in this latter article, as much as you will, but let passion be quite out of the question. To know them only, is sufficient both for your purpose and your safe-guard. This is a more essential study, than one is apt at first to imagine. The characteristic spirit of every nation, is generally more strongly marked in that charming sex, who are always the most interesting part of it. Those who are fond, will soon reveal to you those secrets of the heart, which female policy has taught them to conceal in their own breasts; and even those who have the most reserve, will, notwithstanding, enable you, by degrees, to divine the mystery of their real sentiments. In a word, let their characters be what they may, there is always much to be learned, from a commerce with them; for, in reality, Women are the true preceptors of Men.

THE whole art of being happy with them, consists in not tasking them beyond their natural powers. There are certain devo-

devotees, who paying them too blind an homage, vainly expect constancy in return; but a man of the world knows them too well, to be ever seriously attached to them, and will always leave them to their natural bent—never taking notice of their caprices, unless it be to render them the objects of his ridicule. The surest way of fixing their regard, is by seeming to leave their affections at full liberty.

THERE is no being a match for them, but by despising their empire. Never to confine ourselves to one, is the surest way of being able to deal with the whole sex. They become insupportably tiresome, in the tedious course of a serious engagement; but appear divinities, through the transient glare of a temporary passion. The delights, the charms, the fairy land of Love, consist in the vicissitude of hopes and fears, in the first dawnings of success, and in framing schemes for breaking off again. These are, I think, the three fundamental points that those rational philosophers rest upon, who know their own interest, and even that of women also, too well to fa-

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tigue

tigue them with an obstinate amour; where nothing remains to warm their affections, but the dying embers of a flame extinct, and desires, already palled by fruition.

You will deceive yourself, extremely, my dear Viscount, if you should take it into your head to fancy that I jest upon this subject; the apparent lightness of my expression, is only made use of as a method of conveying the benefit of my own experience to you, without the pedantry of instruction. You must fly from the world, or laugh at it; I have chosen the latter, as the pleasanter scheme, and I most willingly submit to all the malignant conjectures, that can be formed with regard to my character. For example, I am at present in a very difficult situation; but I am determined to draw every advantage from it, that prudence and conduct can derive from the most unlucky circumstances.

Would you believe it, I am at this instant but just escaped from the ridiculous embarrassment of a serious attachment. I
abso-

absolutely felt the most dangerous symptoms — My star declined, and sunk from its ascendant—I became the dupe of the slightest artifice; the martyr of the most obvious coquetry! — I dwindled into a simple swain; and only owe my escape to one of those master-strokes of art, which can convert the mortification of the heart, into a triumph for its vanity.

As I do not imagine that you have much employment on your hands, at present, or, that you have yet acquired a relish for the tedious calculations of your uncle, with the dull researches into musty records, you will have sufficient leisure to read this long epistle. Send me your journal, and learn to profit by mine.

THE fair one, who brought me within a hair-breadth of ruin, is the *charming* Marchioness de Syrcé. That epithet, which we bestow so liberally, and frequently apply so ill, seems to have been framed peculiarly for her. It is impossible for any one to be more so—nor can all the efforts of art, render any person more constantly worthy of that description.

Her power of captivating is at once sudden and lasting; I have felt it by sad experience. I have admired her, for three months, in-tire, with an ardor beyond example.

IMAGINE to yourself a mouth with all the smiles of infancy playing round it; with eyes almost endowed with intuition, of tint cerulean, but rendered hazle by expression, armed with long black eye-lashes, that strive in vain to veil the rays that sparkle through them; a skin of the most dazzling whiteness, all its own; arms rounded by the Graces; a foot that a Chinese might envy; and above all, a form, light, elegant, and full of softness, yet truly majestic, when she would assume a dignity.

To these transcendant gifts of nature, you must add the most refined morality; a wit of prompt conception, free delivery, and adorned with every grace of elocution; the most sportive fancy, tempered by the strictest manners of decorum; a species of coquetry that captivates and perplexes you; the most lively sallies of humour; a caprice which in-terests

terests you; a warmth of sentiment, with sometimes a shade of melancholy, which engages your sympathy the more, from its being impossible to divine the cause; a soul both noble, generous, and benevolent; a creative and romantic imagination, which insures its pleasures within itself, while others seek abroad to find them, and supplies enjoyments beyond the bounds of Nature.

SHE was but fourteen, when she was married to the Marquis of Syrcé.—In the space of two years, during which his constancy was rather doubtful, she brought him two sons; but from that æra he has indulged his libertinism among those pliant fair-ones, whom we bribe, worship, and despise — Worthless, but commodious merchandizes, that pass from hand to hand; that amuse our minds, without engaging our hearts; whose ready arm receive our idle youth, our faithless husbands, and all credulous strangers, whom they make a point of ruining, in order to distinguish themselves, and leave a fit example to their successors.

THE Marquis is meerly libertine; this is the utmost of his offence. He is not, indeed, one of those over-fond husbands, who surfeiting themselves of the matrimonial banquet, grow churlish to every other guest, and become tyrants over every action and passion of their wives. Marriages, under our present notions, neither are or ought to be any thing more than a kind of mutual exchange, which facilitates circulation, and increases the general commerce of society.

FROM this principle, Syrcé seems to have acted; and tho' he has too much sense to be solely devoted to his wife, which would be a ridiculous piece of superstition, in this enlightened Age; he has, however, the merit of behaving with the utmost propriety towards her, in every other instance. He is neither jealous, nor tyrannical; but lives with the Marchioness, like a polite and respectful friend; he even pays her some attentions, which, though our present modes may tolerate, they do not exact; and after his horses, his dogs, and his mistresses,
the

the Marchioness is most assuredly the thing he seems to love best in the world : besides, his rank in the Army obliges him to be frequently absent ; all which circumstances render him the most convenient husband, that ever was framed, for the purposes of her admirers ; and therefore, whenever he sets out upon his circuits, he carries with him a *rosary** of benedictions, to prosper him in his progress.

IT is then that all the hopes, the projects and pretensions of all the rivals who dispute the heart of the Marchioness, become warm and animated.— Their gallantries and assiduities may perhaps be rather displeasing to the good old lady, her mother, with whom she has lived, ever since she was married, and who is, without doubt, the most respectable person upon earth, and one whom I revere beyond expression, after my fashion of adoring virtue ; but they have separate

* A string of beads, which Roman Catholics make use of to number their prayers by.

apartments, and one seldom sees that fine long edifying figure, that gives me the vapours, for a fortnight after I have ever had the misfortune of meeting her.

You see, then, that the Marchioness is as much at her liberty, as a pretty woman can be; and I assure you that she makes good use of it—she is at every public place, at every opera, every ball, in every drawing-room, and at every entertainment.—She seems to multiply herself, to be every where at once, and is every where envied by the women, and adored by the men; attracting the latter, and laughing at the former; but seeming, however, rather to enjoy the jealousy of her own sex, than the admiration of ours.

WITH qualities so sympathetic with my own, could I foresee that she must be the rock, on which the glory of all my former ventures should be shipwrecked? Yet this has been the case.—I mined my approaches, erected my batteries, and formed my plans of operation, with the
most

most perfect generalship; yet none of them succeeded.—I received, indeed, some flattering civilities from her, which encouraged my hopes, at first, till I found I could boast of no exclusive property in them. But I have not temper enough for a skirmish, and chuse always to press the action, equally impatient to enjoy the triumph—and resign the prize.

BUT the Marchioness did not allow me time to make the trial.—The subalterns in galantry boast of conquests which they never made, while we of a superior rank, find a kind of consolation, even in the confession of our defeat; we rest upon our former trophies; the glory of our past victories warrants our future success, and atones for the present mishap—I am, therefore, not extremely discontented with myself, and could even raise the present siege, if I did not think it absolutely necessary to continue it, for example sake. It would be extremely dangerous, my dear Viscount, to suffer women to boast such a precedent, without punishing the aggressor; which every pretty woman may
be

be deemed, in one sense; at least, they who tempt an assail, may be properly considered as the authors of their own defeat.

THERE is another reason, too, for persevering—There are people who pretend to say, that under the appearance of levity and dissipation, she conceals the most solid principles; the most prudent reserve, with a kind of gloomy virtue, that governs her mind, even in her gayest moments: if so, it is absolutely essential to herself, to avoid the suspicions that may arise against so mixed a character.—I am satisfied with her having rejected me, from caprice; but I will not suffer the idea of her having resisted from virtue: and as I have really an high esteem for her, I shall labour to convince her of her own weakness.—Since I cannot win her, myself, I will try to conquer her, by proxy, at least. It will be in part a victory to defeat her obstinacy, though one receives no other advantage from it. By this means I shall recover my tranquillity, save her character from the disgrace of suspicion, and give to the present age, a woman who
ought

ought to be at once its model, and its ornament.

I LIKE the project, and will become answerable for its success. Our rebel Beauty is not in the least aware of the ambuscade I have formed against her, and which it will be lucky for her to fall into. About two months ago, I detached the Count de Mirbelle to watch her motions. He has youth, an elegant form, and one of those countenances made up of mildness, sense, and sensibility, which is apt to impose on women, persuading them of every thing they say, and even of more than they express; and by inflaming their imaginations, dispose them at length to hear, believe, and grant, every thing.—To these advantages are united, a thousand agreeable qualifications; and he excels in all the exercises suited to his rank and age.—As to his character, I think it sublime, as it happens to square exactly with my view—easy in his temper, a little weak, open, unsuspecting, and sufficiently docile, to the hand that governs him: in short, the Count seems to be the very person

person framed by nature for my purposes.

HE is descended from an illustrious line, and is also distantly related to me; but for some years past his family have not enjoyed the sunshine of Court favour; I have therefore taken the advantage of my influence, to present him there, and to introduce him to all our women of distinction who give the *ton*—He is well received among them; they see that he has wit and vivacity, with most expressive eyes, and hope in time to make something of him.—He has lately been involved in a duel, from which he extricated himself with a becoming spirit, and has received great honour, from his conduct. In a word, Mirbelle looks up to me, relies on my opinion and advice, and as he is extremely grateful, for the attention I have shewn him, will be led what lengths I please.

You must allow that the supplying the Marchioness with such a *votary*, in the sense you and I understand adoration, is letting

letting her off, upon very easy terms, truly. Let them say what they will, she must have had amours, though she may perhaps have conducted them with such secrecy and prudence, as to escape the notice of the world. But that is no business of mine——It is necessary that this affair should be proclaimed aloud—I care not about the success—the publicity of it alone, can satisfy my pique. I have introduced my second, my *croupeer*, into every house where the Marchioness is intimate. The old Presidente De Sancy, who is still as debauched as if she was still solicited to be so, has, at my request, introduced him to Madam de Syrcé, who has already been brought to act upon the defensive.

SHE affects an air of dislike towards him, or else seems not to take notice of him, huffs him without any cause, or bursts into fits of laughter, with the first fool that comes in her way; fancying that, by these means, she conceals her tender prepossession towards him. While, on the contrary, these very manners betray

tray that she is already intangled in my snare.

HER pretended coldness answers to my wish, as it will serve to quicken Mirbelle, rendered supine and languid by the dullness of a twelvemonth's engagement, in another place. The Marchioness seems rather to have piqued his vanity, than touched his heart, and the activity of the former will probably answer my purpose more effectually, than the most tender and unaffected movements of a real passion.

Now I have taken you behind the scenes, do you perceive the drift of my machinery? The dear Marchioness shall be brought to doat upon a man, who is little more than indifferent towards her; and shall be thus punished for her folly in rejecting me, by being necessarily obliged to regret me. Nor is this all I have in view; by giving Mirbelle employment, about a woman he does not love, I facilitate the means of robbing him of one he does; and she is, indeed, worth the hazard of the enterprize.

THIS

THIS woman is a romance personified ; she is young, elegantly made, fair, an Englishwoman, and a widow. I have sometimes seen her, at the play, where she never appears but in a balcony, peculiarly appropriated to herself and her company. I have wandered, whole mornings, about her house, which is near a league from Paris, and been transported with the pleasure of gazing on her unperceived.

IN her size and air, she bears a strong resemblance to those lovely Grecian Girls, painted by Vien ; her countenance is serious, but noble ; her look, tho' commanding, is blended with an expression of tenderness and sensibility ; and over all her features there is an air diffused that demands respect, with a soft melancholy, at the same time, which invites to love. There are some slight deficiencies in her form, which statuaries, perhaps, might object to ; but, take her altogether, she is an interesting object ; and I really think it possible for a man to be very much attached to her : she seems, moreover, to be endowed with a quick-

quickness of spirit, in her looks and gestures, with which I am delighted, as it is so admirably contrasted with the soft grace of her outward appearance.

IN good faith, I am not much surprized that the simple Mirbelle should feel some remorse in deceiving her: I feared that I should never be able to have detached him from her sufficiently, to make him enter into my present plot. What signified my telling him that confining himself to an Englishwoman within a league of Paris, was absolutely devoting himself to banishment? He answers only with a sigh; and though that is but a childish kind of reply, it sometimes confounds my eloquence.—He pretends to tell me that his mistress is every thing that he could wish; that her person, wit, and character, are exactly suited to his taste and disposition; that she has surrendered herself to his love, with such an unfeigned confidence, that it would be the height of inhumanity to deceive her; that she has no other friend or consolation, upon earth, but him. In short, there is no end of his arguments,

guments, when he attempts to justify his constancy --- Every thing, he says, conspires to fix his attachment there, even the mystery of their amour.

His mistress, by living at such a distance from Paris, is removed beyond the notice of his family ; and she leaves him perfect master of his own liberty, from her dependence on his love and honour. He departs and returns, at will, without her ever appearing to be dissatisfied or unhappy. This is to me one of her greatest charms ; I abhor your puling querulous dames ; such turtles are apt to dull the ear, with their plaintive notes ; for let lovers be ever so fond, they grow impatient at too jealous an inquiry into their fidelity.

You may now observe, my dear Viscount, what a complicated intrigue I am engaged in ; the gratification of my pique, on one hand, and of my pleasure, on the other. Excuse the length of my letter, on account of the importance of the subject. A slight indisposition has confined

confined me at home, for two days, and I thought I could not employ my leisure better, than in corresponding with you--- Let me know every thing you do, and pay me back your confidence for mine. Your adventures cannot have the same degree of consistency as mine, because the course of your travels must render your abodes short and uncertain---but no matter---A true Frenchman shoots flying. — I, who am fixed to a spot, have more leisure for art and method in my amours; and my memoirs must necessarily partake of the manners of the place from whence they are written.

Love me and answer me; let me have full descriptions of your Italian Beauties; they are said to resign themselves wholly to sensuality; ours, indeed, are not of that character; but then they are false, coquetting, and credulous; which makes amends. Adieu.

Let me know every thing you do,

LET-

LETTER VIII.

From the Count de MIRBELLE

To the Duke de VILLENEUVE.

YOUR Grace deceives yourself, extremely: so far from having arrived at settling *Preliminaries*, as you affect to suppose, I frankly confess that I am totally discouraged from pursuing this affair, any further, not only from the difficulties opposed by the Marchioness's conduct, but also from the secret feelings of my own heart.

I AM not yet inured to the mortifications of an unsuccessful amour, or to those pangs necessarily inseparable from perfidy and baseness. — I am, alas! but too sensible to Madam de Syrcé's charms; she is a perfect enchantress; not a sentence escapes her, that is not worthy of being recorded; her motion is accompanied with every grace to win the heart, and every glance she gives, captivates the mind. Time, which moves slowly, every where else, borrows wings, in her society;

we no longer count the hours, but by our regret at their departure. But the more she allures my pursuit, the less can I think her an object fit to be sacrificed to a transient gust, or the caprice of a moment.

IN an effusion of confidence, of which I am sensible of the value, you confessed to me that you yourself had tried, in vain, to gain her; judge then, my Lord, if I should attempt a fortress, which you have found impregnable. If she has baffled your experience, can a novice, like me, expect success? It will certainly be more prudent in me to make an honourable retreat, in time, than to wait to confirm my disgrace. The Marchioness defends herself with too much skill, to be proceeded against rashly.—With me she does not even practise that general coquetry, which she allows herself with others; to me she is frequently peevish, sometimes rude, and contradicts me upon most occasions. She seems to distinguish me as the very victim of her caprice. I confess that, for some days, I felt somewhat for her, which I mistook for passion. Vanity, pique, and

and resentment at ill treatment, might perhaps have served in place of love, to urge me on, if the voice of honour, nay of simple honesty, had not recalled me to dearer ties, and restored my affections to an object whose attractions I feel the more strongly, for every struggle I make to forsake her.

I CONFESS the charms of Madam de Syrcé; her remembrance will be always pleasing to my mind, and perhaps, not indifferent to my heart. But where is there such another woman as Lady Sidley? And yet I do acknowledge, that though her charms are still in their meridian, I am now no longer sensible of that tumult of the senses, that fever of the pulse, that inconceivable emotion, which, pained by its excess, accompanied the first transports of my passion; but more collected, I feel a peculiar tenderness, a generous emotion, a something not to be defined, that softens me into tears, whenever I find myself ungrateful, or suspect the firmness of my constancy towards her.

THE flame of love may abate its fervour, in the noblest heart, but cannot be extinguished, but in the basest.—How painful an effort to break the idol we have raised, to change the adorations of an heart once truly smitten, into cool civility; to despoil ourselves of all those charms and merits imputed to us by the grateful object, whom we had once selected to render happy!—To withhold the slightest homage they have been accustomed to, is to deprive them of all*.

I HAVE

* THERE is a delicacy in this sentiment, which deserves to be better expressed: I shall therefore borrow the words of another Writer, upon the same *nice* point, in order to do it justice. Speaking of what the French stile *Les petits soins*, he says, “It is by
“ these lesser assiduities, constant attentions, and little
“ offices, though all trifling in themselves, that a
“ sincere passion manifests itself, more than by the
“ highest acts of liberality and kindness: for Love,
“ *contrary to every other passion, shews itself more, in*
“ *small things, than in great ones.*

“ WHENEVER persons begin to betray an indifference toward these lesser cares, one may venture to
“ pronounce that their attachment will not long
“ survive; for this delicate sentiment, like chastity,
“ is forfeited totally, by the first slip. It is religion—

I HAVE now laid open my whole soul to you, and do not think I could have chosen a better confidant. The lightness of your manners does not extend to your character. The services you have done for me, and my family, as well as the many marks of kindness you have shewn me, sufficiently warrant your worth. You are too well acquainted with the world, as well as with the human heart, not to see with a single glance, the difficulties of my situation. My extreme youth, the easiness of my disposition, my warmth of passion, an honest heart, the illusion of vanity, the restraint of principle, with a spirit above disguise, must raise a tumult in my mind, which can only end in wretchedness. No, I will listen to my own sentiments, I will abide by them, and them alone—Here will I fix. This is a measure which is attended by no conflicts in the resolve, nor leaves remorse behind. I would prefer even the most cruel pains,

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to

“gion—a failure in the slightest branch, is a breach
 “of the whole; and injured in the most distant part,
 “like Achilles wounded in the heel, it languishes,
 “it expires.” The TRANSLATOR.

54 THE FATAL EFFECTS OF

to those sad pleasures which debase the heart, and leave nothing permanent behind, but the repentance that follows them.

You ask me what reasons I can have for so strong an attachment to Lady Sidley? I can deny you nothing. Accept then, a secret, never yet revealed. I do not *part* with it, even now—I but *deposit*, or *divide* it.

LADY Sidley is of a noble family, in England, which has ever been remarkably distinguished by an inflexible adherence to republican principles. Her father fell a victim to them. In one of those tempestuous times, so frequent among the English, he was oppressed by the Court, without being supported by his country. He was sent to the Tower, where he died like a hero, in the arms of his wife and daughter, whom he had requested never to debase themselves, so far, as to supplicate his pardon from his persecutors.

AFTER

AFTER receiving his last sigh, his daughter, in honour of his memory, vowed an everlasting hatred to that unjust country, that had abandoned him in his distress. That soul, which seemed only formed for love, was capable of hating with that courageous energy, that is ever stamped upon the passions of great minds.

HER mother shared her sentiments, and they both resolved to quit their native land, for ever. They gathered up the shattered remains of their ruined fortunes, which though but slender, set them above soliciting support or succour, from those self-named benefactors, who degrade, while they oblige--those illiberal patrons, who debase the coin of kindness, by the alloy of contempt, and perform their acts of friendship, as if they were giving alms *.

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ACQUI-

* THESE kind of *Haberdashers* in good offices, must always traffic with loss—None but gifts, freely bestowed, ever yield *returns*. A generous mind ever attaches itself to the object of its liberality, and feels as if it had itself received the obligations it has conferred. The TRANSLATOR.

ACQUIESCING in the little they possessed, and rejecting every foreign aid, Lady Sidley and her mother quitted London, and came to settle near Poitiers. My regiment was stationed near it; and when my military exercise left me leisure, I used frequently to visit the old commander *de St. Brisson*, at whose house the best company were to be met with. It was there I first beheld the lovely Sidley; she was under twenty, and a widow. Till then I had only felt the fever of desire—I saw her, and then first knew what it was to love.

WHAT nice and delicate touches does Nature make use of to delineate the first impressions of a sensible heart! Every object round me appeared to have been changed; the days were brighter, and the nights more pleasing. There never was a woman, sure, more formed for realizing all the romantic vision of an enthusiastic imagination, or justifying the most extravagant fondness of an youthful heart.

IMAGINE to yourself the elegance of all the Graces, with the most striking
 charms

charms that form a Venus—A noble modesty, a natural delicacy, a spirited and interesting air, which so few women possess; an understanding sensible and penetrating, capable at once of all the refinements of taste, with all the depths of science. Such is Lady Sidley! such the charms that robbed me of myself.

My bashful looks wandered insensibly towards her, but if by chance I met her eyes, my face was covered with involuntary blushes. She soon perceived the empire she had gained, and even felt perhaps some sparks from that bright flame, which she had kindled. She avoided my looks, but even, in turning aside her eyes, or bending them upon the ground, they let drop an expression which betrayed her sentiment. There was an air of melancholy diffused over her features, that like the shade in painting, gave an higher relief to her beauty. Not of that severe or sullen kind, that awes or disgusts the beholder, and speaks aloud the coldness of the heart. It was that soft sorrow that dwells with tenderness, that is allied to

love, that first produces, and then feeds the flame.

Six months thus passed away in languishment, resolves, constraint, struggles, and torture; when not daring to reveal my passion to Lady Sidley, I threw myself in her presence, at her mother's feet—I spoke with all that natural and unstudied eloquence, which truth inspires—I uttered not a sentence, which I did not feel. At first she seemed offended, my eyes were filled with tears; I pointed to the lovely object that inspired me, and she had no longer power to condemn my passion. Concluding myself already half pardoned, I gave way to all the transports of that tumultuous joy which was natural to my youth, my hopes, the liveliness of my affections, and the presence of my Sidley—Witness of those emotions which she partook in secret, and which were heightened by the restraint of modesty, she could not refrain from tears—I was too attentive to her every motion, to let the precious drops escape me; I flew towards her, and in the excess of my agitation,

tion, clasped her in my arms, and then, as if inspired by love and the moment, My Sidley, my adorable Sidley, cried I out, if your heart is free, and does not disdain to accept the homage of mine, I here swear, by the presence of your respectable mother, by honour, and by Heaven, that nothing shall ever make me break the engagements, which I here contract with you.—I have not yet attained that happy age that makes us masters of ourselves, but love sincere as mine, rises superior to the shackles of laws, or caprice of authority. My family may delay my happiness, but not prevent it : I will preserve that faith inviolable to you, which they in vain would wish me to plight elsewhere. It is in your heart, that heart that now palpitates under my trembling hand, that I deposit this vow—which, if I ever violate, let misery attend my future days, or terminate them by a sudden death !

THE transport of an heart inflamed, the passion which sparkled from my eyes, the sincerity of my emotion, the candour of

my expressions, and, above all, the favourable disposition of Lady Sidley, turned the indiscreet confession I had made, to my advantage. She blushed, and sighed, pressed my hand gently, and received my vow. Her mother yielded her consent, and my love was sanctified by the presence of the supreme Being, a sigh from beauty, and the consenting voice of nature.

DURING the rapid interval of two months, my every hour was marked by pleasure; satisfied with that of loving, I scarcely dared to wish for more; at least my desires were so closely woven with my sentiment, that I confounded them together, and scarcely knew the difference, myself. And when a chaste woman thinks herself adored, she hardly suffers herself even to suppose that her lover has desires.— I sacrificed mine to the delicacy of her mind, and learned from her to find a pleasure, even in self-denial.

HITHERTO I had known happiness without alloy; but what situation is exempt

empt from pain? The æra when mine commenced, was at hand. My family recalled me from my regiment; it was necessary to acquaint Lady Sidley with this sad event; it was also necessary that I should leave her. By dint of prayers, tears, and reiterated entreaties, I obtained a promise from her that she would come and settle in Paris. — Her mother consented to our joint request, but on condition that it might be at some little distance from the capital. I undertook to place them properly.—My first care on my arrival, was to execute this precious commission; and I fitted up the house that Lady Sidley now lives in, with the utmost expedition, to defray the expences of which her mother had compelled me to take bills of exchange, at parting. I delighted in embellishing the retreat which my Sidley was to adorn, with every thing which I thought could be agreeable to her. The garden was more particularly the object of my attention; I enriched it with the choicest flowers—could they be too precious? — her hand was to cultivate, or gather them!

WHEN

WHEN I was almost satisfied with what I had done, I wrote them word that every thing was ready for their reception ; they arrived, and my lovely Sidley seemed to feel the sincerest joy at entering the rural temple that her lover had erected to her. Judge of my happiness ! I saw my charming mistress, every day, without being subjected to the eyes or questions of impertinence or curiosity. The little veil that was spread over our attachment, seemed to enhance its value ; and I at once enjoyed the pleasures of mystery, and the charms of liberty ; I thought my happiness could know no end—How cruel the event that undeceived me !

FROM the time of her husband's death, Lady Sidley's mother had never enjoyed one day's perfect health, and the species of languor that consumed her, made us now apprehensive for her life. Her hour approached, a slow fever had attacked her frame enfeebled by misfortune, and in less than a month's time, brought her to the brink of the grave. It was then that I beheld the whole soul of her angelic daughter
—Every

—Every effort of filial piety and heroic tenderness, were lavished in those painful moments; and when she had exhausted all her powers to sooth and comfort her now dying parent, she yet lamented her inability of doing more. She watched by her bedside, the live-long night, nor could be persuaded, even by her entreaties, to think of rest. She would sometimes press her lips to the dim eyes of her expiring mother, and only withdraw them to give vent to a torrent of tears—What a scene! on one side, a spectre scarcely animated; on the other, grace, youth, and beauty, struggling with Death himself, and wrestling with him for his prey. How sincerely did I partake the indefatigable zeal of my dear Sidley! With what anxiety was my heart torn! Amidst these melancholy scenes, buried in grief, and constantly impressed with the idea of death, how little did I regret the pleasures of dissipation! I only suffered, when I was obliged to be absent, and could not think myself happy, if I was not an equal sharer in Lady Sidley's sorrow.

THE

THE fatal and much dreaded moment, which put an end to all our hopes, at length arrived. The couragious mother of Lady Sidley, collecting all her strength, and retaining, as it were by force, her last sigh, called us both to her. We fell upon our knees, at her bed-side—“My Sidley, said she, to her daughter, who embraced her hands, My beloved! Fate separates us—But if your lover be possessed of honour and of virtue, he may repair my loss — He will not forget his vows; he will remember the voice of a dying mother, that recalls them to his mind—Heaven was his witness—I rest secure on his integrity — He will love you tenderly, and constantly; you will be happy, thro’ him, when I shall be no more. O my children, draw near, and let me unite you! — My death-bed is your Hymeneal altar — My dear Mirbelle, repeat your vow—I expire.”—

AT these words, she closed her eyes—Her daughter’s shriek still vibrates in my ear. In attempting to catch the dead body in her arms, she sunk into mine, and

and remained senseless there, almost a quarter of an hour. — I was too much affected, to assist her— Silent, helpless, my eyes drowned in tears, I sustained this precious load, without having power to remove her, or myself, from this melancholy scene. At length, recovering her senses by degrees, she said, with a heart-rending sigh—“ O my friend ! you alone remain to me, now, in this wide universe ! ”

THOSE words shall be for ever sacred to my heart ; it is impossible that time, or aught on earth, can e'er efface them. And whenever the dissipation of youth, or the distractions of the world, carry me beyond my purpose, I look back on Lady Sidley, in that dangerous moment, and recollect her mother's dying words, whose sounds still dwell upon my memory, alarm my mind, and sink my soul to such a state of tenderness, as can never be shaken off.

UNDER such sanctions, my Lord, my ties to Lady Sidley have been formed.— What man could forget a scene like this, and sacrifice a passion, founded on motives

tives so sacred and respectable, to the slight gusts of transient desire? If such a man there be, I will not hesitate to pronounce him a monster — And how much to be commiserated the unhappy victim, who must fall a sacrifice to his worthlessness or caprice!

THE strength of an attachment, necessarily depends upon the circumstances which created it. As far as I can rely upon my slight experience, I apprehend that our sensibility is more encreased, by painful emotion, than by the calm of happiness. The sensations arising from pleasure, leave but faint traces on the mind, while those that touch the heart, are deeply graved.— One loves to recollect those ^{past} sorrows, for which we are entitled to our own applause—and we are apt to reflect with a secret complacency, on those tender tears that were shed on their account.

I HAVE a thousand pardons to ask of your Grace! for though your philosophy may have armed you against what you
call

call the weakness of sentiment, it is impossible you should read the recital I have here given you, without being strongly affected—I, by no means, repent my confidence; and besides, I confess it, I feel myself in some sort under a necessity of recollecting every event and circumstance, that can strengthen my attachment to Lady Sidley.—That world which I wished to fly from, and into which you have introduced me, the artfulness of our co-quets, and the vanity of endeavouring to engage their affections, the variety of amusements in which I have shared, have not all been able to effect a change in my heart, though they have, perhaps, disturbed my mind, a little.

THE desire of pleasing a thousand Fair, at once, has rendered me less attentive to the happiness of a single one, and insensibly disused me from the habit of loving. Formerly, my Sidley's garden was an universe to me: while in that bower where I could talk to her of love, and hear her soft replies, I wished not for the empire of the world.--For some time past,
I have

I have no longer felt that sweet oblivion, that charming prepossession, that sets at nought all that is foreign to its object.—Even in her presence, I have surprized my thoughts employed on other subjects—A thousand ideas have rushed into my mind, which I did not dare to analyse, even to myself; other forms, besides hers, have glided into my heart, nor have I chased them thence—I continued still to be tender and faithful; but felt no longer happy.

SUCH was the state of my heart, when I first became acquainted with Madame de Syrcé—What I felt for her, doubtless was not love, but next to that, it was, of all other impressions, the most lively.—I ventured to compare her with Lady Sidley, and even dared to reflect upon the advantages which she might possibly possess above her—She had so far seduced my affections, that, for some days, I grew familiar with the idea of the crime, or the misery, of being inconstant.—What have I said? Shall I abandon Lady Sidley! afflict that heart which is devoted
to

to me alone, and has no other confident or stay — Shall I betray my vows ! those vows which were addressed by truth to innocence !

No, not all the enjoyments which vanity can yield, could compensate for the pangs of rendering a being unhappy, whom we have loved — whom we still love. — Strengthen me in my resolution, instead of endeavouring to weaken it. — I have now revealed to you both my secrets and my sentiments — I have unboresomed my whole heart. — My letter is long, but it contains the colour of my fate — I hope you will have patience to go through it.

THEY say the King returns to Choisy, to-morrow, I will try to see you there. — Adieu, my Lord. Madame de Syrcé is only beautiful ; my Englishwoman is both handsome and sensible. Hitherto, the former has only interested my self-love — The other's claims are graven upon my heart — I should blush were I to balance between them, for a moment — Do not rally

rally me, too severely, I entreat you ; and forgive me for being constant.



LETTER IX.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE,

To Madame de LACÉ.

HOW cruel is your husband's jealousy ! It seems he now confines you even from the society of your own sex. You must have seen my name frequently left at your door—I have a thousand things to say to my friend ; I long to prattle with you. That love of gossiping, which the men reproach us with, has its source in the heart ; mine is fatigued with the nothings one is obliged to say, and I can only make myself amends, with you—and yet you are not to be seen ; but I am sure, very sure, that you share in my regret.

BROUGHT up together in the same convent, and born almost with the same tastes and inclinations ; attached by every circum-

circumstance that engages the affections of honest youthful hearts, we promised to each other an unbounded confidence, and to become mutual sharers in each other's pains and pleasures. Our first friendships are, in general, but trifling; ours was not so—It has even surmounted those vanities, which too frequently dissolve female connections; and the ties of childhood have been strengthened, by the growth of reason — I forgave your being handsome, and you were kind enough not to wish me less so—In short, we have mutually given proofs of our generosity towards each other.

WITH all our seeming levity, my friend, we are worth a thousand of those pedants who pretend to be wiser. A dissipation of the mind is often the safeguard of the heart. From fearing too much the danger of sentiment, we are apt, indeed, to run into the other extreme of coquetry; but whether of this Scylla and Charybdis, the rock or the whirl-pool be most fatal, let experimental philosophy determine. We but resemble those timid
birds

birds, that fly ten times farther than they need, to get out of the sportsman's reach. We may easily have too much courage, but can hardly be reproached for too much caution. The memoirs of our unfortunates will soon resolve this question. Thus do I seem to be moralizing quite at my ease, and yet the subject I wish to confide in your breast, must mark my future fate—In spite of myself I wander from it, and but delay my purpose—I tremble at beginning—How falsely am I judged of! how little am I truly known!

I WAS but a child when I was married to the Marquis of Syrcé; you were a witness of my fondness for him, during the first years of our union. Spite of our modern modes, the follies natural to my extreme youth, and the vanity of making conquests, my tenderness was all devoted to that single object. In the space of two years, I became twice a mother; and these new attachments contributed to strengthen my former one; which would have lasted during life, had not M. de Syrcé taken so much pains to destroy it.

It

It had been kinder far, to have deprived myself of existence.

As long as it was possible, I endeavoured to deceive myself with regard to his misconduct, and even condemned my own demerits, for his inconstancy. The publicity and scandalousness of his amours, at length, dispelled my error, and I found that I was sacrificed even to those vile wretches who sport with the health, honour, and fortune of their lovers. I was too timid to reproach him, except by silent tears; but continued to suffer in secret, all those miseries which Hymen can inflict upon forsaken wives.

BENEATH the eyes of a respectable mother, who possessed at once the severest principles, and the tenderest heart, I devoted myself to cultivating the tender fruits of ill-requited love, and bestowed all my attention upon the education of my children. I hoped that such a conduct might recal my husband's affections. —Vain hope! the more he was imposed upon, abroad, the more he disdained the

thought of seeking happiness, at home. He could not bear to be so unfashionable, as to enjoy the tranquil pleasures of domestic life—Unhappy Syrcé!

EXCLUSIVE of what I have mentioned, I had not the least cause to complain of his behaviour, towards me; he never had a frown upon his brow, nor any suspicion in his mind; always chearful and serene; and provided I did not debase myself so far as to question his conduct, he left me absolute mistress of my own. I did not abuse the liberty he gave me, but continued to live in retirement.

My mind, at length, insensibly grew languid, and my temper peevish; my lively active soul became impatient of restraint, and my heart grew indignant at loving, without hope of a return. Worn out with suffering, yet afraid of launching into dissipation, finding only a frightful void around me, I sought abroad for those illusions, which do not compensate for the loss of real pleasures. I now flew
into

into that world, from which I had formerly fled.

HAVING no pretension to happiness, amusement became necessary to me, and I even wished for the admiration of men, whose addresses I was resolved never to accept of. I read romances to amuse my heart, I listened to flattery to divert my thoughts, and I called in coquetry to my aid, to triumph over my sensibility. I took care to restrain my conduct within the line of duty ; but, at the same time, wished to enjoy all the privileges, that my youth, figure, and rank, were intitled to. With such dispositions, I soon gathered a gay and numerous circle about me ; men are naturally attracted to women who neither awe nor disgust them, and one is sure of preserving their attachment, while they grant them nothing.

THIS was all my art, and practice ; but women, being generally of a suspicious nature, imputed my behaviour to other motives. Though I grant that appearances were sometimes against me, the

more I found I could rely on my virtue, the more freely I indulged myself in indiscretion; and it is these that undo us—The certainty of an amour does not hurt us so much as the appearances of one; and the world seems to have a double spite against a woman, who prefers chastity to discretion! — I had a score of admirers, and they were all set down to my account, as galants. — No person's conduct could be more calculated than mine, to exasperate and call forth that picqued kind of abuse, which flatters one, vexes another, and should be avoided by all.

I BREATHED incense as I passed along, I walked on beds of flowers, and every object that I looked on, wore an air of festivity. This enchantment owed its delirium to the perfect freedom of my heart. Why did I not preserve it? Why cannot I recover it? Alas, it has flown beyond my reach! This is the burthen that weighs upon me, that I wish to reveal to you, that I yet fear to tell, and that perhaps you may already know.

O MY

O my friend! I weep upon your bosom, receive my tears as a confession—I love—Yes, it is true! But I shall always have sufficient power over my heart, to conceal its folly.---Why do I tremble, thus? and whence arises this inward presage, that tells me this passion will be attended with the most fatal consequences? It will embitter my days, perhaps shorten them. No matter--- the more I am alarmed, the more I deliver myself over to it---'Tis like a *panic*, where an unknown fear takes away the power of resistance.

I NEED not name to you the object of my idolatry—I think that all the world must guess it.—There is but him alone, amongst the croud of our gay world, that is capable of attracting regard, or justifying, if possible, a woman's weakness. — Heavens! did I say weakness? Fear it not, my friend, congratulate me rather on my *fortitude*, for it is equal to my love.

FROM the moment I beheld the Count de Mirbelle, (his name has escaped me---

it is for ever on my lips) I felt that involuntary confusion that is ever the forerunner of strong passions; my love increased daily, it is now arrived at its utmost height, yet it lies still concealed. The more warmth I feel in my heart, the more coolness I assume, in my outward behaviour towards him. I fly about, more than ever; I rush madly into the tumult of a world which I despise, and carry with me there a wounded and a breaking heart. The Count de Mirbelle is the only object that I seek there; yet, when he appears, I affect not to see him, or at least not to take notice of him.—I but seldom receive his visits; I would rather meet him by accident, elsewhere; and chuse rather to fly from him, than await his coming. He thinks my conduct towards him ill-natured and unjust, while he alone employs my every thought and wish.

SUCH is my situation—he does not now, nor shall he ever know it. You are the single person in the world to whom I dare reveal it.—Judge of my present, and my future sufferings! To love in silence, and
not

not even to know whether his heart is capable of returning my love ! to fear an hundred rivals, without having a right to complain of one ! to feel only the torment of love, and yet to acquiesce in such a situation ! to feed in secret on my tears, my anxieties, my jealousies ! to die gradually by a slow consuming fire, without attempting, or even wishing to extinguish it ! — Such is the resolution of that woman, whom the world deems light and trifling, and has judged of so cruelly—whom Nature has rendered susceptible of the deepest impressions, beneath the appearance of the utmost levity !

THE only ray of consolation that sheds itself on my constrained and miserable state, is, that the Count de Mirbelle has not hitherto betrayed a marked attention, to any particular woman ; he does not seem even to shew a preference. --- I cannot express to you how much this idea has soothed my pains. Slight comfort, this ! He certainly must love—but it is another object, and not me.— She enjoys that happiness which I forego, and may

receive that adored lover into her arms, whom duty banishes from mine, for ever!

My tender friend! sole partner of my sorrows! I will sacrifice every thing to preserve my innocence; my honour shall remain unblemished, though my fame be not unspotted; and the heroism of virtue shall triumph over the single guilty passion that ever yet found entrance in my heart. I will acquaint you with the success of my efforts, and to you only will I speak of those painful struggles which my tenderness must cost me. The Count de Mirbelle shall never know them; and I will affect a still greater air of levity and dissipation, for fear he should discover my susceptibility; and if I can contrive to banish him, entirely, I shall applaud myself for a conquest, which I shall never cease to lament; and to which, perhaps, I may myself fall a victim.

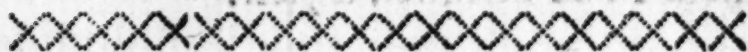
You are going to exclaim against the extravagance of my project; but extremes, in all cases, are made for me; they are my proper element. Suffer me
then

then to rave, and indulge myself with cherishing chimeras ; there may be a fund of reason hid beneath my folly, which only waits for a concurrence of events to be discovered. I cannot describe to you the various emotions of my mind. If I struggle against my inclinations with such vehemence, it is because the moment I should yield to them, would be for me the epocha of every misery,—perhaps of still greater weakness. There is nothing that I would not sacrifice to the lover, on whom I had bestowed myself.

WHAT a passion is love ! In what forms does it appear to my imagination ! It is there the little God is a Divinity, indeed ; it is there his power reigns absolute and uncontrouled, that he rejoices in himself, and that his very essence is refined by delicacy. I write like one that's frantic, I know not what I say ; yet I do not repent me of any thing I have written, as I am certain of encreasing your esteem, by the free confession of my situation. Love, in that degree to which I feel it, does not

degrade — it elevates the heart — passion derives its virtue from its strength *!

Do not attempt to advise me; for even your counsel would now be useless to me. I will acquaint you with every thing; it is yours alone to read my inmost thoughts — nor shall even the violence of my present delirium, ever weaken the sincere and unalterable friendship that I owe you; and, if the presages of my mind be true, you will divide my last sighs with the object of my love.



L E T T E R X.

From the Duke of —,

To the Count MIRBELLE.

INDEED, my dear Count, you are a much greater master of the Pathos, than I could ever have imagined. — Your letter

- * “ Be never cool reserve with passion join’d,
- “ Love not at all, or else be fondly kind;
- “ In this, extremes alone can truly bless,
- “ The virtue of a lover, is excess.”

Lord LYTTLETON’S Epistle to a Lady.

letter is a perfect tragedy. And though I am not much addicted either to romance, or reflection, you have contrived to affect me, in such a way, that I must beg, if you should happen to have any more of these dramatic fables by you, you will be so good as to keep them to yourself, and spare my sensibility.

Your opinion of me is perfectly right—I am not exactly what I appear to be; for though I am very well disposed to make a jest of every thing, I could not find one word to laugh at, in the long account you have given me of your intrigue with your Englishwoman. On the contrary, it has rather left a gloom upon my mind. I did not know, dear Sir, before, that the old Lady Mother had with her dying breath bestowed the nuptial benediction on you. There is certainly nothing very lively, in this business, but then it is extremely edifying, which is infinitely better, you know.

So then, it is all over with you, and you are absolutely fixed, for life, to your Bri-

tish Paragon. I foresee that you will make a shining figure in succeeding ages, through the fame of so distinguished a passion. I will believe that they have not imposed upon your inexperience, nor invented a pompous melancholy tale, to catch hold of your youthful sympathy. I am a moral man myself, and have all the credulity of a child about me; I shall, therefore, let the story of the old man, the tower, his persecutors, goalers, &c. pass as a matter of authentic record; nor will I examine how far this attachment may injure your future advancement in life, and render you the object of indelible contempt and ridicule.

BUT of what consequence are such considerations, when one is so much overpaid, by the pleasures of the heart? And what are the advantages of rank or fortune, to an innamorato, possessed, at a league from Paris, of a lovely stranger, who has neither friends or relations; and is contented to be buried in oblivion with you, in that new Eden, which your hands have planted and dedicated, to Venus and Pomona? There
is

is really something very sweetly innocent, in such a devotement to love and pastoral life. The golden age revived!

How could I be such an idiot to think of turning your affections on the little Marchioness? What comparison can there be, between her and your Amaryllis? An inconsiderable woman that all the world talks of, whose sentences are repeated, well received at Court, adored in Paris, and followed by all our young, people of fashion; who is, in short, in the full blaze of youth, and *ton*, and in possession of all the secret avenues that lead to preferment.

WHAT an incumbrance must such a mistress be, to such a Strephon! I therefore do not press you to pay her your devoirs.—You must be buried alive with your pensive Briton; neither see, nor admire; any thing but her; turn shepherd, lead an Arcadian life, and despise all reflections that can be cast upon you. Your family may, perhaps, murmur a little; but what does that signify? Ye can retire into your garden,

garden, shut yourselves up there, like Adam and Eve, and thence, with pity and contempt, look down upon this world of wickedness and woe ! Parents, guardians, or advisers, might as well attempt to change our tastes for sweets or bitters, as think of altering the natural relishes of innocent hearts for the rural pleasures of shady groves and purling streams.

I AM certain that your friend, the Chevalier de Gerac, strives with all his might to confirm you in such laudable sentiments—he is really the most austere little pedant, that I have ever yet met with. I know not what ill wind has imported this species of small gentry, or rustic Squires, among us, who *cap à pié*, in rusty armour, stalk up from their bleak antient castles, to uncivilize and chill us with their still antiquated and frigid notions. Their swarming hither is an absolute invasion—I compare them to those cold blasts which come from the North, to spread a gloom over our horizon. Let us oppose this irruption of Goths and Vandals, with all our might.

You

You will, doubtless, think me too presuming in speaking my opinion so freely, of this Monsieur de Gerac; but as I have not presumed to oppose your love attachment, I thought I might be permitted to criticize your ties of friendship; these have not the partialities of passion, on their side, and may therefore be more philosophically discussed.

You will tell me that he has virtues--Virtues! call them prejudices, arising from the rust of provincial ignorance, and a want of a polite education—Such virtues are out of date, have no proof in them, and tend to no purpose. This is to go backward in knowledge, instead of advancing. Such obsolete notions are only suited to the pedagogues of garrisons, and to those mutilated old Captains, who after having lost their legs and arms, without the Court's knowing one word of the matter, retire to their native thatch, to wage war against some poor devil of a curate, who curses them while living, and buries them with joy.*

BUT

* This sort of warfare between country parsons and reduced officers, may be characteristic, perhaps, in France; but the description given of it, here, is very deficient of humour, to an English reader.

BUT I have said too much upon this subject, for you are undoubtedly master of your own conduct, and the zeal of friendship should never, like bigotry, degenerate into tyranny—mine bends to circumstances. I deceived myself in thinking that I had discovered in you the luckiest disposition for making a considerable figure in life, by having art enough to render trifles accessory to the promoting the highest pretensions. But, above all, I fancied that you possessed that kind of genius, which is peculiarly formed to succeed with women, to pique, perplex, and whistle them on and off, to make them subject to the general plan you had laid down, to turn the current of your intrigue to the advantage of your ambition, and make your fortune by the variety of your pleasures.

THE old commander of *Foix*, it seems, knows you better than I.—He maintained, the other day, at my house, that you would never rise above a certain pitch. I told him that I had almost fixed your attachment to Madame Syrcé; he offered to lay
any

any bet against your success; I accepted the proposal; I have lost the wager, it seems, but I only regret my being obliged to change my opinion.

MADAME de Syrcé, you say, has foiled me, and you ought not therefore to attempt her—Excellent logic, truly! If you had a mind to hear, I would answer you, that the moment is the more favourable to you, for not having been so to me.—Women, Monsieur Le Comte, have no *corps de reserve* to help them to rally, and when once they come to be harassed with an obstinate resistance, they are rendered the more incapable of withstanding a second assault.

BESIDE, a caprice proves nothing, my minute philosopher, and the denial of to-night, might possibly have been followed by the compliance of the morrow. If I could have spared a couple of days more, to have thrown away on the pursuit, you would not have had it in your power to make me such an objection.†

BUT

† This is the stile of all fops, on a disappointment. When their pride is mortified, they seek consolation in their vanity.

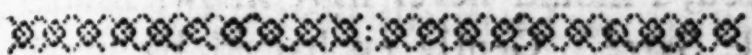
BUT have you really any faith in the Marchioness's virtue? I own that I committed an indiscreet error; I had proclaimed my intention; the fame of my success alarmed her; but it was the Public that she feared. Take away the scandal, and we shall have no cruelty to complain of. Women are seldom coy, from principle.

ONCE more, those difficulties that opposed my triumph, did not exist against yours; and you might by this achievement, have silenced that calumny which has limited your conquests to the *Grissett*, merely. But we must think no more of this matter, now. The mother of Lady Sidley from the hollow of her tomb, commands you to be constant; and the manes of my Lord, would rise up against you, should you ever cease to be so.

ADIEU, my dear Count! I shall always be very glad to see you, notwithstanding
your

Une Grissette—A country girl—A citizen's wife, or daughter.

your solitary attachment, and that extreme awe with which the severity of your morals must naturally inspire me.



LETTER XI.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Duke of —.

HOW very cruel you are, and how little do you enter into the distress of my situation! Raillery degenerates into railing, when addressed to those whose minds are not sufficiently at ease, to pay it back in kind—it insults a wounded heart. Give me leave to tell you, that the stile you have assumed, is neither that of superiority, nor of reason. One seeks for means, the other supplies them; you have done neither, and yet I never stood more in need of resources and consolation. From you I ought to expect them; I must affirm it.

You

You have drawn me into the snare, and there you leave me; and from the brink of the abyss, you rally the unfortunate wretch whom you have plunged into it! But for you, I should never have known Madame de Syrcé. Gently enchained by my first ties, I should have sought none other; it was you who painted this conquest to me with such attractions, as seduced my vanity, and have even, perhaps, reached my heart. You affect not to perceive my embarrassment; yet my whole letter betrays the conflicts of a man of honour, struggling with himself; mistaking his penitence for resolution, endeavouring to conceal his weakness from himself, dwelling on the motives that have rendered him culpable, and applauding himself for determining to sacrifice them to his scruples.

Yes, my Lord, I flattered myself that the account I gave you of Lady Sidley, would have interested you in her favour, have opened your heart to this amiable unfortunate, called you to her aid, and inclined you to become her guardian and defender. But instead of interpreting my
letter

letter as I wished, you strive to fill my mind with the most injurious suspicions, which are a perfect outrage against candour. Never, my Lord, did falsehood approach the soul of Sidley. Every thing I told you, has been confirmed to me by persons truly respectable, but it is her alone to whom I will give credit; her heart is the sanctuary of truth.

How inexcusable the caprices of our sex! Even while we do justice to the object of our attachment, and even feel the force of our ties, we have yet the rash courage to break them!—What then is this eternal void which the heart feels, this inquietude that nothing can lull to rest? Charms of variety, ye promise happiness! Alas, how bitter are your performances! with what regrets are ye not empoisoned! I will prevent them—I will accustom myself to look upon the Marchioness with indifference, to become insensible to her disdain, and laugh at her affected negligences. In a word, I will combat this *penchant*, which by the mere force of obstacles, the casualty of events, and the arts

arts of coquetry, might possibly become soon a too serious passion.

WITH your sagacity, it is impossible that you should not perceive that she has not the least idea of me, and that she would soon laugh me to scorn, were I to attempt the declaration of a passion for her. I visit her at least four times, for once that I am admitted, and then during a frozen conversation, which expires almost every instant, her eyes seem to wander about, on any thing else but me.—If any other man comes into the room, while I am there, her gaiety instantly revives, her looks become animated, and she appears as if she had got rid of a burthen. I fatigue her so much, that every person who arrives after me, appears, from her reception of them, to be welcomed as a comforter.

THIS is exactly the situation I stand in, with the Marchioness, and I congratulate myself upon it. I shall be the more sensible of Lady Sidley's charms, of that open generous heart, that has never been dishonoured

dishonoured by artifice or cunning. But perhaps I am unjust, perhaps the Marchioness's conduct may be perfectly free from disguise; I do not inspire her with any passion, and she knows not how to feign; I think her affected, but there are some in whom such appearances are natural.

THIS, then, is the secret of her constrained manners, her reserved discourse with me, and of that little petulance she sometimes betrays, without my having offended her. Luckily, my liking for her is but a slight one, and may very easily be conquered. The present small anxieties I suffer, may save me from a world of future pain; and at this moment, I consider her cruelty, but as a kindness.

WHAT might have become of me, if my whole soul had caught the infection, and an invincible attachment—I cannot stop at this idea—what would have become of my Sidley, I say, whom I forced from her former asylum, whom I dragged hither, who neither is, or will be known to any human

human being but me, and who would look upon herself as criminal, if she dared even to suspect my conduct?

HER situation must have been dreadful, mine ought to be still more so. It is now over—In spite of the severity of your irony, the cruelty of your misrepresentations, and the powers of your rhetoric, I applaud myself for the entire restoration of affections I have made to that object, whom I could never have forsaken, without being guilty of the most vile ingratitude.

You are not deceived; the Chevalier de Gêrac helps to strengthen me in these sentiments. Inflexible censor of every dishonest or unjust act, he becomes an Enthusiast in the causes of honour or virtue; and give me leave to say, that the title of my friend, should have deterred your Grace from placing him in the mean and ridiculous light you have done.

I SHALL not spend time in defending his pedigree; his family is ancient, though
not

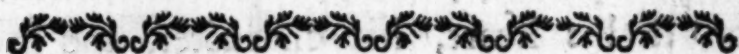
not illustrious; and has, in all times, furnished the State with loyal and gallant soldiers, who have shed their blood in its defence; and if their services have not been rewarded, it reflects not on them, but on the Court. But what I contend for, is his heart, his character, and my election of him; which equally does me honour, and vouches his worth.

If Gerac despises titles, it is from his love of glory; and if he has not been naturally endowed with those pliances which besit a Court, he is certainly possessed of that sturdiness which becomes a Commonwealth. When you shall know him better, you will blush at having prejudged him so hastily, and at having spoken contemptuously of a man that merits both your esteem, and mine, and whose noble and disinterested spirit has set him above the mean sollicitudes of hunting after patronage.

FORGIVE me the warmth of my expressions, in attributing them to a heart quickly moved at every attempt to de-

grade the objects of its affection. Ill be-
 fal that wretch, who does not feel himself
 an affront offered to his friend !

I have the honour to be, &c.



L E T T E R XII.

From the Chevalier de GERAC,

To the Count MIRBELLE.

I WAS grieved, my dear Colonel, at be-
 ing from home, when you called on
 me ; I was engaged in returning some
 dull visits which lay on my hands ; on
 my return I found your letter, which in-
 terested me extremely.—You are then
 what I wish, and what you ought to be—
 you are restored to yourself, to your ge-
 nuine principles, from which you could
 only be estranged by some violent or ex-
 traordinary emotion. I lamented your he-
 sitating between two motives which were
 so little capable of balancing each other.

I NEITHER

I NEITHER know Madame de Syrcé, nor your charming Englishwoman, but I shall ever be an advocate for her who has given you her heart; and has, of course, an indisputable right to yours. I know that there are men who make no scruple of seducing women, without loving them, who are lavish of their adorations, while they resist, and of their insolence, when they yield; who flatter merely to debase.—Such cruelty is foreign to your nature, nor shall I ever suspect you of it.—That sex which we so ungenerously oppress, merits our regard, even in proportion to its weakness.

BEHOLD, my dear Count, the contagious power of example.—Without thinking like that worthless crew I have been describing, you were upon the very point of acting, like them. The wretches pretend to happiness, and yet set out with poisoning its source.—Let them try to esteem women, they will then see whether they are not estimable. Have they a right to despise the morals they inspire, or to resent what they advise?—When our mistresses deceive us, and debase themselves,

the disgrace should be all our own; they but peep a little into the future, and their inconstancy arises from a presentiment of our perfidy.

I HAVE always detested those self-named *successful galants*; the sight of one of them, in spite of me, raises an idea in my mind of twenty unfortunates. Under an outward appearance of gentleness, and humanity, these beings hide a savage and a cruel soul.—They resemble conquerors; like them they feed upon the sighs and tears of those they have subdued, and like them, too, they would slaughter all before them, if they were not, in general, even more cowardly, than vicious.—Their souls are frozen, their understandings barren and uncultivated, and if it were not for the little emotions arising from their intrigues, they would be nothing more than automaton, overwhelmed with ridicule, lassitude, and contempt.

PERHAPS, my dear Count, you may think that I have coloured this portrait too highly; but a little exaggeration is allowable,

lowable, when one has a material point in view. When the rock is strongly marked, we shall not run and dash ourselves against it; but if concealed beneath a smooth and gently gliding stream, our treasure may be ship-wrecked, unawares.

You will find me a strict moralist, for my years; my youth might, perhaps, with others, lessen the credit of my counsel; but your good sense prevents my apprehending this objection from you.—A Mentor of five-and-twenty, who has been well born and educated, may be full as good a preceptor, as a Pedagogue of three-score. That reason which seems only supported upon an old ruin, frequently disgusts, and the quick feelings of right and wrong, have infinitely more force, than the slow documents of experience. Besides, when old folks begin to preach, we always suspect their doctrines to be a little infected with the mortification of being deprived of those pleasures they condemn. They forbid, what they cannot enjoy, and from thence we conclude their severity insincere; but instruction acquires

new strength, when it comes from a mind susceptible of every pleasure, and a heart assailed by every passion :--no suspicions of apathy can then weaken its influence, and we must either believe the virtue of our friend, or distrust our own.

I COULD never yet conceive, my dear Count, why persons of our age are denied the privilege of giving advice, or instruction even, if necessary. In the prime of life if men have not a logical sense of virtue, from reason, they have, at least, a sentiment of it, from instinct ; the traces of innocence are deeper impressed on their minds, they have yet but little acquaintance with mankind, nor are their sharp feelings blunted by collision with the world ; their thoughts are not intent on mean calculations, which dry up the source of liberality ; not being confined within themselves, they seek abroad for other objects to rest upon ; and they love with ardor, being credulous of the same return of affections. The empoisoned fruits of experience ripened by age, do not mingle their bitterness with the sweetness

ness and purity of our first impressions.—Years teach men wisdom, but youth is the season of virtue. You fully prove the truth of this aphorism.

Excuse this digression; it flowed almost involuntarily from my pen, and I never reject the inspiration of sentiment.—Yes, my dear Count, we are at all times of our lives possessed of an invariable rule to act by; it is this that has recalled you to your first ties, and prompts me to confirm you in keeping them unbroken. Were we to act otherwise, we should be both of us unjust. She who has sacrificed most to you, should certainly be the most dear to you; whose heart has been fully proved by time, and her charms being also unimpaired, her happiness ought to be so, too. When passion is founded on esteem, the edifice can never subside, while its base subsists; and that kind of apathy which you have lately experienced towards Lady Sidley, is rather your fault, than her's; arising more from want of vigour in your mind, than want of merit in her.

How interesting does she appear to me! To judge of her affection, you must recal the confidence she expressed in you, when you were upon the point of betraying her.—It was from yourself I learnt it.—She rested securely in the refuge of those arms, which were almost open to receive another possessor. You are her universe—she is superior to suspicion, and fondly thinks, while under your protection, she can have nought to fear.

O my dear Count, repay her love by love, and her esteem, by your's.—Let us never be inhuman to that weak sex who are anxious for happiness, and seem to be so well formed to enjoy it. To rob a woman of the enchantment of an unsuspecting passion, would be to plunge a poignard into the bosom of a child, while it was innocently amused by a fairy dream.

I do not injure Madame de Syréé, by defending her rival; she has only attracted your admiration; she has no claim to your gratitude. You became acquainted with her, by chance; you visited her, you thought

thought her handsome; your head grew giddy; her vanity was flattered by the triumph, though she valued not the prize; the conquest was all she pretended to; her ambition is gratified, in this, and can therefore have no failure of obligations, to reproach you with.

THE only article in your letter, that I dislike, is that where you speak of her—you are inexhaustible in her elogy—and for fear I should not see her with your eyes, you have repeated the draught of her portrait, above twenty times. I am seldom guided by public opinion, but you must know that it is not very favourable to the Marchioness.—They say she is giddy, dissipated, fond of exhibiting herself, and so desirous of adoration, that she purchases votaries, sometimes, at the expence of her prudence.

I know nothing of the matter, myself, and what I have heard may possibly proceed from the voice of calumny; but if you were even otherways disengaged, and resolved to dedicate your devoirs solely

to her, these are not the only faults I should oppose against such an attachment; and think I could then be able to arm my friendship with still stronger objections, to combat your passion for her.

My dear Count, if the Marchioness does not take care, her reign will not last long; her beauty will decay, and her failings, supposing she has any, will then appear without a veil to cover them; her sensibility alone will remain, for her punishment. These sort of women are like flashes of lightning; the blaze they make is too bright to last, and when it ceases to dazzle, leaves no trace behind.— I know not where to finish — I imitate you—Madame de Syrcé has certainly some secret charm, that leads one on to talk of her.

I THANK you for your obliging offers; attend to your own happiness, and that will increase mine. --- You know me; I have served four years under your banners, and I do not think that in all that time you have discovered in me the smallest
impatience

impatience for preferment. I divide myself between the duties of my profession, and those I owe to my Father; a respectable old man, who lives on his own lands, covered with wounds, superior to titles, neglected by the Court, but respected by all his connections. I have been brought up in his principles.— Till my actions speak for me, I will not accept of any rank, that might call their merit in question. I prefer the hardy labour of a gallant soldier, to the idle activity of the effeminate Courtier; the one stands in need of titles, to cover his insignificance; the other only seeks for glory, and waits for proper occasions to acquire it.

ADIEU, my friend—once more I wish you to think rightly of yourself, talk less of Madame de Syrcé, continue faithful to your Englishwoman, and act ever toward her, in such a manner, as to prevent my ever having an opportunity to stand forth her advocate, again.

LETTER XIII.

From the Viscount de LORME,

To the Duke de VILLENEUVE.

YOUR Grace is pleased to compliment, but when the mind is wearied, one has no spirit for any thing. Rome, with her endless ceremonies and indulgencies, is to me the most disagreeable abode on earth. My uncle, whom you know to be a warm politician, is still a more zealous admirer of religious rites; so that, three or four times a week, I am compelled to act the devotee, whether I will or no.

I AM a philosopher; I generalize my ideas, and see things in such relative lights, as my uncle never dreamed of.—As to those monuments of the fine arts, you mention, you must allow they are but chilling sights, to a man at my time of life, who stands not enraptured before an old painted canvass, nor looks enamoured on a marble vestal.

WHAT

WHAT are the allegories of Paul Veronese, the transfiguration of St. Luke, or Raphael's falling Angels, to me? I believe I have confounded them a little; but no matter — I am almost tempted to wish that you who extol them so highly, were reduced to admire the marriage of the *Allobrandins*, and the statues of *Bernin*, or *Bandinelli*.

I GLADLY skip over their ruins and their tombs, nor shall I entertain you with an account of the pitiful shews that are exhibited in this august city. Our little interludes, our elegant ballets, and our opera, even such as it is, are infinitely better, than the tedious representations they give us here. — I am going to surprise you; but I tell you, in confidence, that what I like best in this country, are their *Filles de joie*, and their Harlequins. — These are the fruits of my observations, my dear Lord Duke.

Do not from hence suppose that I have not had affairs, even amongst the best com-

company.—The Italian Ladies are very complying; they seem to like me, extremely, and besides, think me very sensible. It is said that their husbands are dangerous, to indiscreet galants.—I have hitherto escaped their vigilance — I have had nothing to do with them — my dealings have been intirely with their wives. The women here are false, as is natural to libertines—but their skins are soft, and their manners still more so.

A PROPOS, I must relate to you an adventure that happened to me, lately, with the Lady of the house where we lodge, at present, and who, as you will soon judge, has a most charming manner of exerting her hospitality. The husband is a great friend and intimate of my uncle's, and his wife is of a distinguished family at Naples. She therefore indulges herself in a few airs above the vulgar; she has in her appearance a greater carelessness, or *non-chalance*, than I ever observed in any one before; she suffers her words to drop from her lips, without taking the trouble of pronouncing one.

Her

Her neck, which is lovely, both in form and colour, is never covered with any thing but some slight ribband, negligently folded into a slip knot, to be easily detached without untying, upon occasion. Her eye is languid, but has an expression of languishment in it, which invites to every thing, without promising any thing. The slightest silks appear to oppress her; and reclining the whole unactive day, on the soft cushions of a sofa, she disposes her beautiful form into a variety of the most tempting and alluring attitudes.

THESE charms and these manners naturally possessed me with strong emotions of desire; but she seemed neither to have the apprehension to perceive my passion, nor the inclination to gratify it. I would have sacrificed any thing to gain her, but saw nothing in the eyes of my idol, which could promise me success. An accident hastened my happiness.—The husband, full as jealous as the Italians were reported to be, formerly, and extremely enamoured of his wife, happens to be as much, perhaps, or more, in love with pictures,

pictures, than with his wife. There was a sale held the next door to him, some time ago, at which he had purchased several small paintings, at a considerable price, which he would trust no one to remove to his house, but himself. He had hardly gone out (which was a thing he rarely did), to bring home his treasure, when I heard the sound of female slippers, on the stair-case leading to my apartment; the person ran nimbly up to the door; I thought of nothing less than my fair indolent; but what was my surprise, when I saw her enter the room, in the most familiar deshabille, her neck uncovered, her hair flowing loose about her waist; then throwing herself on the couch, said to me, with a briskness and ingenuousness truly captivating, and which I had never observed in her before, *Eccomi; il mio marito è fuori di casa * !*

THERE is a life and spirit in her *têtes à têtes*, that one could never have imagined from the usual tenor of her manners.

* Here I am, and my husband is not at home.

ners and conversation ; but what charmed me much, was the promptness with which she reassumed her former languor, on the appearance of her husband. The most suspicious Italian alive must have been the dupe of it. All hail the sex, for these quick transitions of character ! They have countenances which can assume any expression, on the sudden, and features which they can mount or dismount, at will. This species of phænomena is what I principally admire them for.

THE virtuoso husband arranged his pictures round the room, placing them in their respective lights, with the greatest complacency imaginable, before the eyes of my lovely Neapolitan, who all the while resembled a Virgin of Guido, from the air of innocence she had diffused over all her countenance ; and after she had approved of his bargain, she bestowed a number of caresses upon him, while he was rejoicing in his stars for having blessed him with a wife of such equal fidelity and fondness.

WELL !

WELL ! My Lord Duke, what do you say to my good fortune ? These *eccomies* have been since repeated, but they happened seldom, indeed, because the husband rarely stirs abroad. However, I am at length grown indifferent about the wife, and 'tis the credulous confidence of the husband, that most amuses me, at present ; and I find more pleasure now, in imposing on the weakness of the one, than I do in possessing all the charms of the other.

You see that I have not forgotten your instructions, and that I endeavour to extend the glory of France, as far as in my power.— I am edified by all that you say to me.--- The revenge you meditate against Madame de Syrcé, is of a new and striking kind ; this trait is wanting to compleat the character of Lovelace, which I think is not sufficiently admired, though it interests me, extremely. I agree with you, that it is absolutely necessary you should compass the Englishwoman, let her purchase be what it may. If one was not to interfere a little, the environs of Paris would be filled with
prudes,

prudes, and the contagion might reach to the very center of the city, perhaps, at last.

WHO is this Count de Mirbelle? He must certainly, have some of those natural qualifications and propensities, which form an agreeable rake, since you have pitched upon him to be your avenger.— I think, were I in his place, I should punish Madame de Syrcé, without the least remorse. From the picture you have drawn of her, she deserves the severest treatment.

How I envy you! you float upon the full stream of pleasure, while poor miserable I am banished to the Holy Land, set down in the middle of another Palestine, without even having the merit of killing a parcel of Saracens, for the honour of religion. You did not expect this stroke of erudition; I had it from my uncle, who talks to me for ever of the voyage of Dutremer, king Artus, and those glorious massacres, that were formerly

merly so piously performed, for the benefit of mankind.

THE good man is always the same; all the morning he puzzles his poor brains, with dates and calculations; he remains at dinner as long as he is able; after which, and a slight fit of drowsiness, he sits down as to a serious business, to play at chess.—He always loses, and always insists upon it, that it is not owing to his want of knowledge in the game.—That ended, and his digestion performed, he thinks of his salvation, and sets out to visit the churches—Woe be to me, if he happens to lay hold on me, in one of these devout fervors!

THE other day, he would have me to sit by him, while he took his afternoon's nap, as he fancies that many things escape him, in his slumbers, that might be of great use to government, which he has desired me to make notes from, and intitle the *Political Dreams of a French Gentleman*. — This book, he says, will be in great repute with all those dreamers, that wish

wish to overturn the Administration. But without perceiving it, I am doating away, as well as my uncle, and you have something better to do, than reading my nonsense.—

ADIEU, my Lord, I am impatient to be enlisted under your Grace's banners.



L E T T E R XIV.

From the Duke de VILLENEUVE,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

I SHOULD not, in a thousand years, my dear Count, have guessed to what a degree you are interested for the Chevalier Gérac.—Nothing less than the warmth of your apology, could have opened my eyes; and I now sincerely ask your pardon, for the indiscreet folly I ventured to make against him, and I hope you will accept of this reparation. You are right—the man is very capable of being an excellent citizen, but as you yourself say, I don't think he will ever pretend to the title of a courtier. As to the rest of your letter,

letter, all I shall say, is, that we live in an age of prodigies—So let us quit your Pylades and Hermione, and talk of something else.

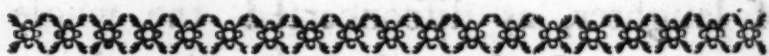
You will see, by this letter, that I am not so much wedded to my own opinion, as you imagine. With the same earnestness which I formerly pressed you to pursue the conquest of Madame de Syrcé, I now entreat you to decline it.—The clearest sighted are sometimes deceived.—Neither the cunning acquired from experience, nor a perfect knowledge of the world, are able to withstand the unluckiness of circumstances.—I fancied that I had discovered in the Marchioness, a slight inclination in your favour; and this was all we wanted—we should not have asked for more, as that would have carried her just as far as we wished.—But it would be wrong to flatter yourself with that hope, now.—After this, who can define the sex? I shall relate the fact.

IN a certain house, that it is needless to name, the conversation turned upon our young men of fashion—you were mentioned.

tioned. Some of the ladies, and those good judges, maintained that you possessed every talent that was requisite to please. Madame de Syrcé contradicted most vehemently, the general assertion, and opposed a negative to every article of it that was afterwards urged in your favour. She criticized your character, your figure, even your countenance, with the utmost severity--and when one amongst them, modestly insinuated, that she believed you were master of art and address, at least, your cruel antagonist burst into such a fit of laughter, as disconcerted the whole company. In short, it was not her fault, that you were not stripped of every grace and accomplishment, you might ever have pretended to.—She began the scrutiny with disdain, and ended with bitterness.—She seems to have conceived some marked antipathy against you—Such are the sex.—It often happens, that the most amiable men become the objects of their aversion.

I THOUGHT it incumbent on me to acquaint you with a scene in which you
were

were so much interested, and I may add exposed.—All that remains for you, now, is to resolve to forget Madame de Syrcé, never see her more, and to punish her by a total absence and neglect, for her indecent and outrageous treatment of you. It is true that she is as beautiful, as it is possible to be—but that is not sufficient to compensate for her having accused a man of faults, or defaults, which were never imputed to him before. Adieu, dear Count!



LETTER XV.

From the Count MIRBELLE,

To the Chevalier GERAC.

WHERE could you be, my dear Chevalier, when I called upon you, this morning? Monstrous! What an early stirrer you are! I wanted of all things to meet you; you would have seen me in a glorious passion—I defy you to guess the occasion of it.—Madame de Syrcé—You know what I think, and what I have said

said of her—You know the warmth with which I always speak of her, even in the instant when I swear to forget her.—Well! Madame de Syrcé—is become my most mortal enemy—she has declaimed against me, with an unexampled violence.—It is not enough, it seems, that I have been the sport of her coquetry, I am now become the object of her contempt and derision.—She hates me—but why, I know not—What have I done, except praising and admiring her charms, and giving myself up for her—to those distractions which you have too frequently seen, and condemned? She hates me, when, perhaps——This is not a vague conjecture; it is a fact, my friend.

IN a large circle she inveighed against me, denied every thing that was said in my favour, and seemed even to be carried out of herself, by the vehemence of her aversion towards me.—I should not have given credit to this account, which I own appears a little exaggerated, if it was not confirmed by the recollection of her frozen air, her constrained discourse, and

that peculiar species of reserve, which she seems to have only with me. I am strongly tempted to discover the cause of this caprice, and to arm myself with all the arts of address which can be opposed to the insolence of coquetry.

No ; it is better to command my resentment, and govern myself with moderation. — I acknowledge myself to have been highly provoked by the Marchioness's conduct, but reflection has calmed my rage. — Behold me now perfectly tranquil, and I hope quite cured of my former weakness ; it was absolutely necessary that she herself should remove the bandage from my eyes—without her aid I had still, perhaps, continued blind.--If this little event had not happened, I know not whether the interest she had in my heart, might not have embittered the very source of my happiness.

THAT interest is now destroyed ; I shall henceforward hear her name pronounced, without emotion—Sidley shall reign unrivalled in my breast ; no other image shall

enter

enter there, and mix itself with hers; I shall no longer wake with the painful anxiety of hesitating between two impressions, nor feel remorse for robbing her of my first thoughts, who alone deserves them all—Let Madame de Syrcé triumph in her scorn—her hatred shall have its free course; I am content to be a silent victim, and will sacrifice even my resentment to her.

Do you think, my dear Chevalier, that it would be a great crime to convince her that I am not so stupid or deficient of address, as she imagines; to bring her by degrees to the necessity of denying her opinion, and to venture the appearance of a little infidelity, for the present, merely to give a greater *eclat* to my future constancy? Should I become false to Sidley, by punishing her rival, and convincing her that one may be faithful to her, without becoming totally insensible to the charms of another? I am pleased with this combination of ideas; I think it innocent—what say you? Lay aside the seve-

rity of your principles, and consider only how I am situated.

My head is almost turned; I am agitated by a thousand different thoughts, and know not which to fix on—I am only clear in one point, which is, that I no longer love Madame de Syrcé—I should be much surprised if it were possible to prove the contrary—What do I say? I never loved her, I deceived myself; but my illusions are now all vanished.

ADIEU!—I know not what I say; I contradict myself—Come, or write, to me—I cannot account for Madame de Syrcé's conduct; it is certainly extraordinary—Alas! what will mine be?*

* This Letter is full of that dangerous kind of sophistry, with which both men and women are apt to deceive themselves, in such situations.

L E T.

LETTER XVI.

From the Chevalier de GERAC,

To Count MIRBELLE.

WHAT are you thinking of? Is it possible that the conversation of a *trifling* woman, or at least one that is considered *in that light*, can disturb your mind, excite your resentment, or pique your sensibility? Besides, are you sure that she did hold such a conversation, and that it has not been misrepresented, in the repetition? Why are you not superior, my dear Count, to these little mortifications? Women are intitled to a freedom of speech, and are at liberty to say whatever they please; it is our faults if we rate their opinion, too highly.

FROM your letter I might be led to think that you adore the Marchioness; but I rather chuse to attribute your agitation to the offence which has been offered to your self love, than to the emotion of a wounded heart. You have had a design on the Marchioness, which has

not succeeded; at our time of life, we are apt to feel these small regrets, too sensibly; our passion increases with our pique, and our very resentment raises an additional trophy to the woman who has rejected our love.

TAKE care, my friend! one is often caught in the snare they spread for others.—You ask me if it would be a crime to counterfeit a passion, in order to acquire rights which might enable you to make your own conditions? Yes, my dear Count, it would most certainly be highly criminal; particularly so in you, whose delicacy would blush at obtaining a success by fraud, which is due to love alone.—Ask your own heart this question, and be determined by its answer.—I discover the Duke, in this project; I do not find you there—believe me, those who feign what they do not feel, do not revenge, but punish, themselves.

WHEREFORE should a man that is happy as you are, give himself up to such disingenuous intrigues, that fatigue and disgrace

grace the heart, that strip it of all refinement, of that interior charm, without which possession can never rise to enjoyment. Indulge your heart in those delights that love has so liberally bestowed upon you, and do not languish after those that are denied.—Be careful how you expose yourself in this affair; see the Marchioness but seldom, and neither betray resentment or regret; behave in such a way as to make her blush at herself, for the preference she has given to others.—This is the only triumph that is worthy of yourself.

I do not fear tiring you, because I truly know your character.—Attached to honour and virtue, if the easiness of your temper draw you aside, let their idea be presented to you, and on the instant you embrace their laws.—I consider it as my province to hold them up to your view.—How pleasing is the task!

LETTER XVII.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Chevalier de GERAC.

I Cannot comprehend Madame de Syrcé, she almost sets me mad; her conduct is totally unaccountable—and my best way would be intirely to forget her.—Yes! that would certainly be right; but I cannot help talking of her to you, once more, for the last time—I must acquaint you with the almost incredible reception she gave me, yesterday.

ACCORDING to your advice, I stifled my resentment, my brow was serene, my heart still more so.—In this tranquil condition I went to wait on her, firmly resolved not to let her perceive that I had the smallest reason to be dissatisfied with her.—I was told she was at her toilet, and did not admit any visitor, but that she would shortly appear in her mother's apartment, who then saw company.

I WAS

I was shewn up, and found Madame de Sancerre alone, and working at tapestry.—This Lady has all the manners of the *vieille cour*, an unaffected politeness, a noble frankness, and a great deal of wit; but she has also a face that I could not help thinking extremely dismal, in spite of my respect for her—she asked me many questions, seemed pleased with my answers, and to shew her kindness, began to preach to me.—Every thing she said was perfectly sensible, and well expressed; but notwithstanding all her eloquence, there never was a sermon more impatiently listened to—I expected a pretty woman, and she did not come.

At length, after waiting an eternal hour, Madame de Syrcé arrived, lovely as Venus' self, and dressed out in all the elegance of attire. She made me some confused excuses, seemed embarrassed, addressed a few incoherent words to me, and rose up, the moment after, said it was horrible to have kept me so long waiting, and shocking to be obliged so

soon to leave me; then saluted me coldly, and vanished.

SAY, my friend, could you be easy in my situation? I never saw her look so beautiful—her image has not left my thoughts, one moment since—I would forget her, I have resolved to do so.—But how is it possible I should?—I think it would be better to revenge myself, and strive to please her, cost what it may. To leave me two hours with her mother, and not make me amends, by even a few minutes conversation!

SHE said she was going to the Opera—what a polite apology! I flew there after her, and to compleat my mortification, could not find her out—I know not in what box she had hid herself, but I fatigued my eyes, in vain, with looking for her.—You see that her conduct is decisive.—Can you still think that she can ever be made to blush at seeing me, unless it be with anger? She abhors me; and why? Let me once more declare, I know not.—But I will know.

You

You will think me extravagant—I am so, I avow it—Luckily, this folly is not dangerous; I own that I am piqued, but it is clear that I am not in love; I should be miserable if I thought I was; and it is for fear of falling into that weakness, that I am resolved to pursue my project, and to play the knave, in my turn.—Timid consciences never succeed with women. There is the Duke—he deceives them all, and they believe him still. *A propos*, what have you done to offend him? or how happens it that ye are not well together? Not that he has said any thing to me, upon this subject, but that I am not satisfied with his manner, when you are mentioned.

If you can come to me, early to morrow morning, I will wait at home for you; if not, write to me, but spare your advice; it will be useless, now—I am determined to indulge my fancy.—This small trespass will save me from a greater.—It is necessary that I should become a little faulty, to prevent my being wholly so.—What an unaccountable being is Madame de Syrcé!

LETTER XVIII.

From the Chevalier de GERAC,

To the Count de MIRBELLE.

YOU desire me to spare my advice; but indeed, my dear Count, you never stood more in need of it, than at this moment. — How easily is your *head* inflamed ! for, not to deceive you, that alone is affected, and yet your *heart* must suffer all the pain — You are determined to seduce, deceive, and corrupt your own pleasures, beforehand, by laying their foundation in falsehood. When one sports with the miseries of two Beings, at once, they run the risque of rendering themselves unhappy, also, and deserve to be so. On certain occasions, men think they are only trifling, when they are playing the barbarian; circumstances draw them on, affections are transferred, and a moment's pleasure is frequently purchased, at the expence of a life of regret.

AND what is the pleasure, what the enjoyment ? To see your Sidley's eyes for ever

ever quenched in tears ! the tender, faithful Sidley ! who stands alone in the great universe, without relations, friends, or even support — To hear her sighs and complaints break through the silence of her retreat, unanswered by any thing but the echo of her walls — Hear her devote the fatal hour, in which she knew you first, and even still more lament the moment in which her weakness sealed a confidence in your now broken vows ! A prey to bitter reflection, without one consolation. Think but a moment on this object, and be happy if you can ; or bless the friendly hand, that has so timely presented the image to your view. — Horrid as the idea is, avert it not—let it penetrate your very soul.—It is a blaze that will warm, while it enlightens, it.

I WILL not, dare not, would not, think that you love Madame de Syrcé ; your pride alone makes you desire the conquest ; and to that insignificant motive you would sacrifice every thing.—Where is the glory of subduing a coquet, or the pleasure of forming those artful wiles,
whose

whose success must cover you with remorse or shame. If Madame de Syrcé is only what we think her, she is not worth the cost of perfidy. But if we are deceived, which may very possibly be the case, and that her outward form conceals an honest and a noble heart, how would you be embarrassed, how severe your repentance, how dreadful your reflections!

THE human heart is not capable of two equal attachments; which of them would you sacrifice? They must both be dear to you, but one of them must have the preference; and the other will always have sufficient force to wound the heart where it no longer reigns. — All those dear illusions which constitute the delights of love, must vanish then; when the heart is no longer pure, its enjoyments cease to be so. Bitterness mingles with our sweetest pleasures; regret for the past, casts a gloom over the present; and even in the arms of the chosen object, reflection will stir up compunctions in the mind, for the one forsaken.

My

My dear Count, these evils are yet far distant—it is in your power to prevent their nearer approach. Let not my friendship appear burthensome to you; it may be useful, and it is far from being severe; it has no right to be so; for in the very moment that it opposes those indiscretions which may be fatal to your peace, it is ready to weep over that weakness from whence they spring. My reasoning proceeds intirely from my heart, it ought not therefore to offend your's.—Learn to fear those who talk another language to you, who assume an air of superiority, in philosophy and the knowledge of the world, and use a kind of fashionable jargon, merely to deceive, and lead those minds astray, which are already bewildered; who ridicule the most respectable obligations, and insensibly destroy, even in the most virtuous hearts, the natural and precious feelings of instinct.

I SHOULD pity you if you could hesitate, for a moment, with regard to the original, for whom this portrait is designed.

signed. — It is necessary that we should know our enemies. — You ask me whether I have done any thing, to offend the Duke of ——— ? Yes ; I have seen thro' him— Beneath all the vain decorations and formal elegance of the Courtier, my eye has penetrated the Man.—O, my dear Count, ill betide those who are *detected* by being *discovered*. The Duke is one of those—the moment I found him out, my features, of themselves, acquired an expression of disdain. It is a sure, but secret weapon, which wounds him, and avenges me. His pompous demeanour imposes not on me ; 'tis but the mark of his insufficiency.

THE first time I happened to fall into his company, he affronted me with that insolent kind of politeness, which while it affects the air of condescension, seems to mark a superiority, on one side, and a subordination, on the other. But I received his address, so coldly, as to deprive him of the advantage he wished to take, and soon reduced him to that level, which he had endeavoured so haughtily
to

to destroy. The more I feel myself inclined to pay proper regards to others, the less can I bear to have them exacted from me; and he is one of those that seem to demand them. — His pretensions to respect are so very slight, that he is the more greedy of deference; and I am not apt to be very prodigal of my complaisance.

FOLLOW my example; distrust the man who would debase himself, for ever, to obtain a momentary gratification; who dishonours a great name, by the obscurity of his little intrigues, and thinks himself of importance, because he is spoken of for his amours; and those with women, too, whose vanity attaches them to him, more than their inclinations. — But let him continue the object of their rivalry, and a party in their libertinism; let him be accepted without love, and quitted without regret; and let him be the leader of the fashions, who ought to be a pattern of the virtues.

WHAT service has he done the state? What, for his country? Is he a father, a husband, or a common-wealth man? Does
he

he know the sweets of a disinterested friendship? He is a stranger to all these ties. His inquietude and weariness force him into society, in search of dissipation! he flies from solitude, because he fears to look into himself.—Forgive the severity of my pencil; it is guided by the hand of friendship; I foresee with grief, that your too partial opinion of this person, may warp your principles, injure your character, and destroy your peace.

Do you recollect the letter you wrote to me, about a month ago? in that you spoke your natural sentiments.—How much is your stile altered! It is impossible your heart should be so changed, and it is to that alone that I address myself; turn it toward nobler objects, and you can never think a triumph over a few frail women, a conquest worth your boast.

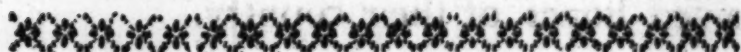
You have an amiable mistress, cherish and preserve her. You acknowledge that to the possession of every good quality, she adds every charm, and yet say you are not happy! If there be still something
wanting

wanting to your sensibility, awaken it by noble deeds, strengthen your love by that heroism, of which it ought to be both the source and the reward.—Do not limit the sense of your actions to the small circle of the capital, devote yourself to your country at large, and suffer it to presage what you may one day be.—Distinguish yourself from the croud of wretched beings whose decrepid and decaying youth present you with the ruins of their early ripeness, and cheat the promised hopes of their country.

LET us unite, my friend, in doing good; the flame of enthusiasm is almost extinguished; glory is no longer an object of ambition; let us enter into a vow to be solely guided by her inspiration, to oppose the corruption of the age, retrieve the character of manhood, and rejoice all virtuous hearts with the sight and the success of our generous emulation. Of what prodigies are two noble friends capable, when roused to ardor by objects worthy of great souls! Their strength is doubled, in each, by their union;
should

should either of them feel a weakness, the spirit of the other would triumph over it, or, at worst, enable him to conceal it in his own bosom.

ADIEU! I write from the country, where I received your letter, and where I shall remain, these two days. The moment I return to Paris, I shall set out in search of you.—May I find my friend and fellow soldier happy!



LETTER XIX.

From the Duke de VILLENEUVE,

To Count MIRBELLE.

I WAS in so great a hurry to go out, yesterday, when you were with me, that I had not sufficient leisure to weigh and consider properly, every article of your confidence.—But I have reflected on what you told me, since, and zeal grows stronger, when assisted by meditation—And so, Sir, you are piqued, at
last

last—you have some spirit still left, I find, and I congratulate you, therefore.

I SHALL not inquire whether you love the Marchioness, or no; that point is by no means essential to our purpose; your business is to gain her, to make the amour as pleasant to yourself as possible, and afterwards to let her float away on the same tide that brought her.—Is not this what we agreed upon?

You must begin by conceiving such an idea of Madame de Syrcé, as you should have; you should avoid betraying the least manner of esteem for her; she would soon perceive it; and perhaps—women are quick of conception; and, perhaps, I say, she might take it into her head to justify your opinion—pride and frailty would then be at strife she would keep you in wind, whole years, without coming to a surrender; and ever temporizing, would not yield at last, without the doleful grimace of an affected modesty; for all which, you would have yourself only to reproach.

TAKE

TAKE one general rule.—If you even had an high opinion of a woman, which very rarely happens, it should be concealed from her with the greatest caution. If she finds that you have but a slight idea of her strength, she is then left at her ease, she sets no price upon the event; nor does she think herself piqued to a vigorous defence, when the decisive moment approaches, which her own conduct has insensibly led to. This is her calculation—By yielding, I shall lose nothing, and I shall gain time; for the sooner this matter is brought to a conclusion, the sooner I shall be at liberty to change.

You must, by no means, multiply your assiduities; they know nothing of women, who fancy they are to be attached by a languid uniform submission, or the insipid flattery of madrigals in praise of their charms. These sort of things but weary them; it is contradiction that awakens, that surprizes, and gives them a taste of their own consequence in their resentments. They always make account of
the

the man who has power to animate their looks with the fire of impatience, to sharpen their wits by dispute, and who provokes them on purpose, merely to be remembered by them. But I anticipate; let us proceed methodically.—The first step is to conquer your timidity—A strong confidence is a warrant of success.

I THOUGHT with you, at first, that the Marchioness's liking for you had not arisen to a certain point; but after a closer examination, the matter appears to me in this light—What seemed to us indifference, nay even dislike, is nothing more than a concealed passion, a sort of smothered flame, which upon a little stirring, would soon crackle and blaze forth.

I HAVE met her, several times, since you have neglected her, and her mind seems totally engaged; I have even surprized her lost in revery, which is by no means natural to her; and, at her age, what can the subject of her musings be? Her eyes,

eyes, that before could express no other sentiment but spirit, have acquired a certain softness in them, and seem frequently fixed upon the ground. Thou art, assuredly, the occasion of this metamorphose. In short, why should she fly you? or why appear reserved and confused, when you are present? She speaks ill, only because she thinks too well, of you.

I RECOLLECT an objection you made to me, that had really something specious in it. If she is so light, so easy of access, so conversant in intrigue, say you, wherefore does she behave to me with so much reserve, prudence, and severity? The case is clear; she exerts her address, in proportion to her attachment. You are very young, in great request, and may be carried off from her, in a moment; it is therefore necessary to attach you by the arts of coquetry. You think, perhaps, this to be her first adventure—how I laugh at such simplicity! Child as you are! sleep in peace, and don't let the notion of her virtue, disturb your slumbers. She will not suffer you to languish

guish long, either in the expectation of happiness, or in that satiety, which usually attends fruition.

FARTHER still, I must inform you that she has not rejected, but postponed, my suit—This was a whim agreed upon, between us.—But there are ten, at least, ready to depose in her favour, against your ridiculous fears.—Let her alone, and by the time you are come to a conclusion, she will herself aspire to the pleasure of breaking off with you.

THE Marchioness is a woman of the world; she will receive your vows, without wishing to fatigue you with keeping them.—It is only necessary that your attachment to her should be known and talked of; and when this is effected, she will pursue her own way, and leave you to follow yours. You will inscribe her name on your list, and your successors will apply to you for instructions; you will tell them all you know, and you will

then have acquitted yourself with the utmost propriety and kindness towards her.

SINCE you are absolutely determined never to abandon your Englishwoman, you may then return back again to her. I have lectured you, a little, upon this subject; but I begin to be so seriously affected with what you have told me about her, that you may be certain my heart is really touched, by my approving of such an unexampled constancy. Well then, since Fate will have it so, you shall once more return to her; and the little remorse, arising from this *transient lapse* of faith, will awaken the feelings of your heart, and render it but the more sensible to all the moral charms of fidelity.

THE only difficulty, we have to apprehend, in this business, is that of deceiving your fair recluse, compleatly, and by that means saving you from the irksomeness of reproaches, the embarrassment of tears, and all those tender expostulations, which distract the mind, and are to the last degree distressing, to certain natures.

tures.—I have thought of an expedient; it will be a penance on myself; but I am ready to become the sacrifice.—Friendship should know no bounds.—You need only, my dear Count, present me to your Sidley, and I will be answerable for the event. I shall postpone my own pursuits, to devote myself intirely to yours. The desire of serving and obliging you, will furnish me with new resources, every day, to prevent your mistress from having the least suspicion; I shall amuse her mind, strengthen her confidence, and preserve her tranquility, during the continuance of your engagement with Madame de Syrcé.—It is resolved; I consecrate myself to the calm pleasures of the sylvan scene, and am ready to assume the scrip and crook, to accommodate myself to the services of my friend.

WHEN you reflect upon this proposal, you will see how very necessary it will be, at that time, to have some person near Lady Sidley, who knows the hearts of women, and has been long accustomed

to the arts of imposing on them.—At one time, you must be charged with a particular commission from the Court; at another, they must send you on a journey; to-day, you must be engaged to hunt; to-morrow, to a private supper with some great patron.—And if I have any talents, either in address, or converse, I will exert them all to amuse her from suspicion; and the very day after your rupture with the Marchioness, I will restore her lovely rival to your arms, without the danger of her having lost the smallest portion of her confidence in you.

You are going directly to see Madame de Syrcé; do not flatter her too much; mortify her, now and then; the bluntness and indifference of yesterday, makes the respectful attention of the morrow, the more acceptable.—Be gay, and careless, seem always in a hurry, make short visits, and do not utter a syllable without some purpose; appear to be perfectly free yourself, and you will the sooner render her a slave.

IF you happen to know a pretty woman whom she dislikes, it would not be amiss to shew an assiduous attention towards her.—Though this is a secret known to the whole world, it sometimes succeeds; we must reserve those that are less common, for great occasions.—Why should we quit the field, when there needs but a skirmish to gain the battle?

ADIEU, my dear Count! act coolly, and with method, if you can be advised.



LETTER XX.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Chevalier de GERAC.

I WAS at home, yesterday, my dear Gérard, when you were at my house, but I feared to see you, and fled from you.—Alas! my heart is at length culpable. I have said a thousand times more to myself, upon Lady Sidley's account, than even you have done; I am almost distracted, between my regard for her, and

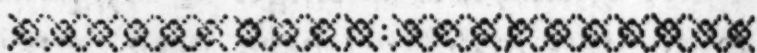
my attachment to another.—My passion for Madame de Syrcé, without doubt, will not be lasting; but, must I confess it to you? it tyrannizes over me, for the present.—Even sleep cannot save me from the impression of her charms; her image gives an existence to my very dreams. Sidley calls forth my tears, the Marchioness enflames my passions; wretched at betraying the one, I should yet be transported in the other's arms.—It is Madame de Syrcé I seek, even in the moment that I am going to visit Lady Sidley—Nay, my passion becomes the more obstinate, from being combated and restrained by another sentiment.

I CONFESS—What would I more? Sidley is kind, and faithful! but her rival—I cannot find words to describe her.—She is accused of being inconstant—Would you believe it? that very circumstance has determined my pursuit. The Marchioness, in crowning my wishes, will not exact any sacrifice from me; she will herself, alas! restore me to my first ties.—

ties.—It shall be so.—She only can save me from herself.—I should be an object of pity, indeed, were she capable of a sincere attachment; but with all the charms of love, she has its fickleness, also.—This reflection secures my mind in peace, and if I am faithless for a moment, it is with a design of being constant, ever after.

My friend, it is no longer in my power to conquer myself; I have been imprudent enough to write to her, yesterday, and have confessed what I could no longer conceal from her.—I have not received an answer, yet, and am ready to expire with anxiety and impatience.—No matter—the worse she treats me, the more she will attract me.—Self-love sometimes goes as far as a nobler passion. I know not what I would have—but this I know, that the agitation of my mind is dreadful.—I am tortured by two sentiments, and know not which of them predominates.—Could she not answer me one single word? That answer might, perhaps, have rendered me wretched, but her silence kills me.

ADIEU, my dear Chevalier ! ours is the age of passions, be therefore tender of mine.—What do I say ? I have no real attachment, but to Sidley—how powerful then must be those charms, which wrest me from it ? I cannot account for this matter to myself.—I am dissatisfied with every thing---compleatly wretched.---O Sidley ! thou hast a dangerous rival.



L E T T E R X X I.

From the Duke de VILLENEUVE,

To Count MIRBELLE.

YOU have conducted yourself finely, to be sure ! One cannot venture you out of their sight, for a moment, without the danger of your going astray.—Are you mad, with your declaration ? It is sufficient to ruin you, totally, or throw you back, for ages. One should attempt every thing with women, but declare nothing to them, unless it be an infidelity, or a desire of breaking off ; in those cases, a
con-

confession becomes *piequante*, and, managed with address, may amuse one, for a time.

You have great reason to congratulate yourself, truly! The Marchioness triumphs, I'll answer for it.—She has obtained all she wished; she has you now down in her pocket-book, and you will never get one step farther. You are henceforth numbered with the dead.

I BEG you may learn this, for the rest of your life, That one should seek to gain every thing from a woman, before they profess a passion for her. They should pay them some little attentions, at first, watch the moments when they are most alone, and light up in their eyes an expression of ardent desire. They are quick at perceiving such marks in the countenance, which throws them into reflection, from whence they are sometimes roused by one of those brisk actions, that affords not time even for imagining a defence.

I do not say that one should intirely begin in such a manner; such a proceed-

ing would have something too gross and unbred in it. There are some deferences, delays, and decorums, that women of a certain rank, are intitled to; or rather those who make a parade of chastity; for they are all most excellent comedians, and formal to the last degree with regard to the ceremonials of our first advances. But mere ignorants, only, proceed in the manner you have done.

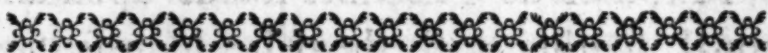
AND so you have not received any answer to your flaming declaration?—Prithee, what reply could you have expected? You are no longer interesting, you no longer inquiet her self-love, and her heart has nothing further to say to you. Behold the consequence of travelling without your guide, and acting without consultation.

I CAN conceive but one method of repairing this mishap, if it is yet possible to be retrieved.—For heaven's sake, have done with your writing, and keep all your fine sentiments to yourself. The Ambassador of Naples gives a ball, next Saturday;

Saturday; Madame de Syrcé will certainly be there—she never misses one.—Madame de Themines is invited, and will, doubtless, go; you must make her useful to you, on this crisis. It is but fair to make those we cannot gain, assist towards our gaining others.

MADAME de Themines stands upon an equal footing with the Marchioness, in point of figure; she has, besides, the reputation of being very prudent; which, on this occasion, will serve the purpose. She is one of those factitious, formal beings, who affect the utmost propriety and decorum, and voluptuously enjoy the paltry pride of appearing insensible.—She knows we wish her to be a coquet, and is vain of that desire. She assumes a disengaged character, and that is her species of coquetry. Such a woman necessarily commands respect, and very quickly forms her circle; you shall be one of the elect who are admitted into it, if you will be advised. Let your dress be very elegant, on that day; be as amiable as possible; our scheme will be successful; but

Madame de Syrcé must be nobody, upon this experiment. This will raise her jealousy.—Rely solely upon me, I have spent my whole life in mortifying the vanity of women.—Is it not necessary to correct her self-sufficiency? This may teach her, another time, not to neglect a civil answer, at least, upon a civil offer.



LETTER XXII.

From the Marchioness de SYRCÉ,

To Madame de LACÉ.

HE has written to me, he has avowed his passion. I felt a joy mingled with terror, while I read his letter. There is no possibility of allowing the smallest indulgence to the most delicate sentiment, without fearing an injury to our honour.—Hitherto I have combated my inclination; buried in the bottom of my heart, it has not yet appeared, even to those eyes which had inspired it. Uncertain of being beloved, I had only myself to struggle with; but now, alas! I must triumph over a much more formidable enemy.

I have

I have fortitude sufficient to endure my own sufferings, but can one afflict whom they love?

WHILE I imagined him indifferent, I affected a coldness towards him, that set me beyond the reach of his utmost penetration; but now that I am made acquainted with his sensibility, I can no longer answer for my demeanour. It will, I fear, betray me. Should I be even able to restrain my words, can I alike refrain my looks? When one loves, passion is visible in every thing; it speaks even in silence.

BUT how dared he presume to write to me? He knows the ties I am bound in, and cannot be ignorant of the duties I owe them; he affronts me, if he can, for a moment, doubt of my fulfilling them.---Yes, yes, I will observe them; he shall not see my tears, or hear my sighs, nor will I from him accept of consolation. A favoured lover is too dangerous a comforter; he heals with one hand, while he wounds with the other;

other ; and every succour we receive from him, but strikes the painful pleasing arrow we would pluck from thence, still deeper in the heart.

My friend, my dearest friend ! what most disturbs and employs my thoughts, is the opinion he may have formed of me. I perceive more ardour, than sensibility, in his letter ; it is more lively than affecting, and seems rather the blaze of an enflamed imagination, than the soft emotions of a heart overflowing with love and tenderness.---Barbarous man ! if he has not the idea of me which he ought to have ; if he believes the calumnies which the jealousy of my own sex have spread abroad, and which have been repeated by the humbled vanity, and piqued pride of some of his !

THIS thought distracts me. If I have not his esteem, what care I for his passion ? The man I love, should avenge me of the wrongs I have received from others. Is it possible that he should judge me with the severity of an unfeeling world, and have

have undertaken to triumph over me, merely from supposing it an easy conquest? I feel the absolute necessity of flying from him; but shall I? or, rather, can I do so? Am I equal to this effort, after what I have endured from my struggles, my dissimulation, my constraint, towards him?

PERHAPS, he thinks me a coquet,---Heavens, how far am I from being one, at present! How often, enchanted with his sight, insensible to every other object, incapable of pleasure, but from his conversation, have I behaved peevishly, nay disdainfully, towards him! I have been often obliged to quit him, hastily, in order to conceal my tears; I distressed him by my conduct, while I was rendering myself more miserable by it. His image remained in the bottom of my heart, and constituted, at once, its torment, and delight.

BUT tell me, my friend, what will become of me? When next I see him, what expression

expression can I give to my eyes? If he talks to me of his passion, how shall I hide my own? or how reply to his? This is the portrait of her mind, whom the world has censured as a woman of intrigue, and aspersed with numberless adventures, which never had an existence but in the malice of her enemies. She trembles now at the sight of him she loves, and is afraid even of his idea; she invokes the aid of friendship, to assist her reason, and reproaches herself as criminal, for entertaining a passion, of which she only experiences the torments.

I CALL Heaven, and you, my friend, to witness, that this passion, whose violence I have avowed, is the only one that ever yet engaged that heart, which I had once devoted to Monsieur de Syrcé; and which he never would have lost, had he not forfeited both my affection, and esteem, by the indecency of his conduct, which he did not even think worth the trouble of concealing from me.

I AM

I AM a fond and tender mother, and would have been a faithful and obedient wife—I will be ever so. Why did not Count Mirbelle respect these sacred titles? Can he believe that my heart has ever yet abjured them? I begin almost to think myself already guilty—have I a mind to be so? O, no! I wish to continue virtuous, and the very will shall supply the strength to remain so.

As a beginning of this painful strife of passion against principle, I have not yet answered the Count's letter. Perhaps this treatment may be too severe—An answer binds us to nothing; it is but an harmless civility*. My silence may afflict him! What do you think of it? How ought I to act? I do not ask, to be resolved; therefore do not reply to me, upon this article. Adieu, my friend! I embrace you, from my heart.

* Such are the salvos of indiscretion!

LETTER XXIII.

From Madame de SYRCE,

To Madame de LACE.

WHAT a night! My spirits are quite exhausted, my head confused, and my heart more agitated, than it has ever yet been. Though sinking and oppressed with fatigue, I cannot resolve to go to bed; I must write to you. I shall not tell you whether the ball was magnificent or not, I have seen nothing of it; I could see nothing, except one woman, whom he continually attended, and seemed to be ridiculously occupied about.— I defy you to guess her; one is not prepared for such extraordinary events; I shall not get the better of my surprize, for a long time.

It is not that she wants beauty, grace, wit, every thing you please, but her character seemed calculated rather to prevent, than encourage, addresses of galantry, at least. Madame de Themines, as you know, is a declared prude, at twenty;
 she

she has adopted a severity of manners, and a kind of methodical discretion, in her whole conduct — Yet, after all, my friend, it required but one gay night, to make her forget her principles. They were annihilated; she became intoxicated with the vanity of an evening's triumph, and seemed to enjoy it, even with insolence. This gives me but a very poor opinion of her understanding.

DURING the ball, the Duke de Rohan never left her, and the Count de Mirbelle — would you believe it, after his late declaration? yes, the Count himself, was one of her most assiduous attendants; he gave her his arm, he walked, and danced with her, and their performance was applauded, to such a degree of indecency, as never was heard of before. A woman of fashion to court applause, to render herself an exhibition, to expose her person as an object of public notice! What say you to such an extravagance of behaviour?

As

As for the Count de Mirbelle, you will be less surprized at his conduct, when I tell you that he loves, and is beloved by, Madame de Themines. This is not merely my own conjecture, I but repeat to you what has been told me. The cruel secret with which I have been intrusted ! it was the only subject of conversation at the ball. Think what I must have suffered ! And this man writes me word that he adores me ! What falsehood ! What baseness ! What can he mean ! or what idea has he formed of me ?

How happy am I to have stifled my passion, in its birth ; at least to have combated it, and not to have answered his letter ! What would have become of me, if I had written to him ? He would certainly have abused the least advantage I might have given him over me. Can you, my friend, think he could be capable of doing so ? He whose charming countenance expresses such sincerity and candor ! What a seducing air and manner ! how formed by nature to inspire a confidence !

At the very moment in which I accuse the Count, a secret impulse rises in my heart, that prompts me to excuse him. Perhaps he has been instigated to this conduct, by that vile Duke, the most worthless of his sex, whom so many weak ones of ours have thought amiable. If he has the least suspicion of my regard for Monsieur de Mirbelle, he certainly has suggested this pretty artifice. That profligate is capable of pointing me out as a subject of ridicule to the whole circle, merely to divert himself, and season the amusements of an evening.

BUT what am I thinking of? It is impossible that the Duke can suspect my love for the Count—nothing has yet betrayed it. But what signifies that, to such a man? He is of a suspicious nature, and with his turn of mind, to doubt is to be certain, whenever it can answer a malicious purpose.

I KNOW not what to believe, or how to act. The surest and safest method would, doubtless, be, to forget even the name of
Mir-

Mirbelle, no longer to receive his visits, to avoid meeting him, to forbid my own entrance into the houses where he frequents, and to leave the field free, for the full exercise of Madame de Thémis's charms. She is so extremely handsome! is she not? and ought she not to carry off the prize?

ALL that provokes me is her affectation of virtue, and the fuss that is made about it.—Where is her discretion? If you had seen her, this night, how eagerly she devoured the incense! how solicitous of admiration! Heavens, how she disgusted me! I who hate no one, was almost tempted to detest her. And why? Perhaps she is not culpable, after all — It may be only I who am so—I blush at the idea.

A THOUGHT has just occurred.—Suppose that, on this occasion --- it would have been highly improper, before—I should write to the Count, and make him sensible of the affront he has passed on me? I write to him! I! His conduct is sufficiently

sufficiently clear, it needs no further explanation, and ought to restore me to myself. I could never have believed that he loved *that* woman—Why endeavour to impose on me?

PARDON me, my friend! I give way to my grief; I do not repent the doing so, as I am sure that it will soften your sympathy. Adieu, my dear, and only confidant! I am sinking under my sorrows, my tears flow fast, though involuntarily, and do not spring from pique, or resentment.

P. S. I have received your two last letters; they are a true picture of yourself, and therefore very dear to me. Your husband would not even have you write to me! — I see it but too plainly, we are the kind of women, that are fated to be wretched!

L E T-

LETTER XXIV.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Duke de VILLENEUVE.

MY dear Lord Duke, what a situation have you led me into! Madame de Syrcé will certainly never forgive me. How beautiful she looked, this night! What dignity, without pride! What grace, without affectation! Madame de Themines is also handsome—but what a difference! We admire the one, the other we adore—and yet I did not speak a word to her! You prevented my paying her that homage which she alone deserves, and turned all my attention towards her pretended rival. What can the Marchioness think of my behaviour? I do not comprehend your schemes. I have a mind, nay, I die to justify myself.—Notwithstanding my attachment to another, but for you, my heart would have been wholly hers. My conduct at the ball has, doubtless, ruined me.—I tremble at the thought.

I HAVE

I HAVE written to Lady Sidley, and desired leave to present you to her; I have not yet received her answer. Adieu. I am going to rest, if repose be compatible with agitations such as mine.



LETTER XXV.

From Lady SIDLEY,

To Count MIRBELLE.

I RECEIVED a letter from you, yesterday; but what amends can writing make me, for your absence? It is thee only I wish for, desire, and expect. How many ages have passed away, since thy presence has cheered my solitude? I do not accuse your delay, I but regret it.--- The sun has not appeared here, since your departure; the gloom is dismal, the cold insupportable.

I SHUT myself up in my chamber; your letter and your picture are my sole companions. I divide the hours of my lonely days, between my harpsichord, my

work, and reading; but thy adored idea mixes with all my occupations; and even in this convulsion of nature, happy in loving, and thinking upon thee, my mind possesses that inward acquiescence, which satisfies the soul, when it is intirely devoted to fondness.

I FREQUENTLY converse with you, tho' we are separated; I talk to you, and think you answer me. Your voice, soft as it is, seems to conquer the boisterous elements, and reaches my fond heart. As soon as you appear, the frosts and snows now spread around me, will all vanish.—Happiness, or misery, mark the variety of seasons to me—O come then! come, and realize my waking dreams, and give me back all that your absence has deprived me of.

WHO is this Duke, that you would introduce to me? What have I to do with him? or he with me? I am interested but for one single Being in this universe --- That dear, that sacred Being is thyself, my friend. I scarcely reflect that
there

there is any other. You know that titles do not impose on me; I regard the statue, not its pedestal. I am insensible to every other pride, but that of being loved by thee.

I THINK I have sometimes heard you speak of this Duke; and as far as I can judge, even from your own report of him, he is of an insignificant, and unfeeling character. Far be this despicable species from us! I can have no sympathy with such people; our natures are not the same; their organs would be incapable of conveying their sentiments to my apprehensions, nor could I frame a language that would be intelligible to theirs. Let me entreat you, then, to dispense with my receiving his Grace's visits.

HEAVENS! what a thought has suddenly obtruded on my peace! If you begin to be sensible of solitude, in my converse; if my society is become languid to you; If I do not fill up every void in your heart, as you do in mine! — I tremble at the idea.

You see the excess of my love, and of my confidence: I would have you read my inmost soul, see all its tenderness, and fear to make it wretched, by suffering the least glimmering of suspicion to enter there! You can take nothing from me, without robbing me of all.

If the slightest inclination towards another object, could exist, but for a moment, in your bosom, there would be a final end to the happiness of all my future days. An insuperable barrier would surely rise between us, and render our separation eternal. — No retreat could be dark enough to conceal my tears--- They should be my only food, till death. I despise those women who are capable of changing their affection, but more those whose weakness ever suffers them to pardon an infidelity. Such is my character! I have hid nothing from you, I have nought to hide; the more you know me, the more confidence you will place in me.

WOULD

Would you know from whence proceeded the inquietude which appeared to dwell upon my mind, when we were last together, and which it is only in your power to remove? It arose from having surprized you in a fit of grave reflection, one day. Be never sad; enjoy all the pleasures that are suited to your age; but now and then, return to that tranquil felicity, which is too delicate to bear either witnesses, or confidants. Thou, for whom alone I breathe, soul of my soul! why cannot I pass my life at thy feet, in thy arms, or by thy side, forgotten by the whole world, forgetting even myself, and unconscious of the value of my existence, but as it bears a price with thee! — Continue to love your Englishwoman, for your own happiness, even to your latest sigh.—You will never be able to replace her affection.

L E T T E R XXVI.

From the Duke de VILLENEUVE,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

AND so, you do not comprehend my schemes. I do not wish that Madame de Syrcé should forgive you; I would have her be distractedly jealous, and furiously angry, while you shall take advantage of her resentment, to fix her inclination. You must learn to torment a woman, till she is blinded by all the vapours of self-love, and then glide into her heart, under the very mist you have raised. In this country, where constitution operates less than coquetry, women never yield, till a parcel of little furies have got into their heads—These imps are under my command.

You may be certain that the Marchioness slept but little, last night. Madame de Themines and you may divide the honour of keeping her awake.—She thinks you on the best footing imaginable, with that prude, whom I have
trans-

transformed into a coquet ; and if she has but a grain of spirit, she will take her revenge, by winning you from her. The rival shone, last night, she will be the subject of discourse, to day ; this is a misery too great to be endured, or forgotten. Avoid writing any more *billets doux*, I charge you, or you will lose all the advantage of my manœuvre. My conduct in this affair, is one of my finest *ruses de guerre*. Almost every person at the ball was in the secret ; Madame de Syrcé expected a triumph, which I have robbed her of, with the compleatest address imaginable.

QUICKEN your fair Briton ; it is absolutely necessary I should be near her, at present, to conjure down the storm, and leave you in possession of that sweet tranquility you have occasion for, to accommodate this transient essay of infidelity. Such a *civil employ* will be dull enough, for certain ; but I look for my reward, from your success, in both places, at once. Adieu.

L E T T E R XXVII.

From Madame de SYRCE,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

MY Lord, I have not answered your letter, because I know not what reply to make to it. But as I now apprehend that Madame de Themines may think you visit me rather too frequently, I have determined to break silence, in order to oblige ye both. Be assured, that I can without pain sacrifice the pleasure of seeing you, to the peace of her you love—you see that I am generous, at least.

I EVEN pardon the declaration you made me, and the insincerity also of those protestations. It would have offended me highly, if I could be affected by your sentiments of me; but the consciousness of my own integrity is sufficient to render me indifferent, with regard to the opinion of others. Yes, my Lord, after what I know, have seen, and was told at the ball, undeceived, and highly pleased at being so,

so, having nothing to regret, but a prepossession perhaps too favourable towards you, I have no body to pity, but yourself. I hope you believe me sincere.

AND now give me leave to say, that in order to preserve the true zest of your passion, you should not make so public a display of it. Your indefatigable attention in pursuing that lady round the room, your eyes solely fixed on her, with the correspondent regard of hers; all, in a word, proclaimed what would have been infinitely more, both to her honour, and your own, to have a little more concealed.

I THINK it is not very long, since your attachment to her has become a public topic of conversation. But I enquire so little about other people's conduct, that I may very possibly be mistaken, in respect to the æra, from whence you date your happiness. But if it be of a long standing, (which I am by no means desirous to know) one must necessarily applaud the warmth of your affection, as it

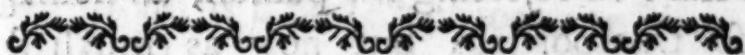
seems to possess all the blaze of a new kindled flame.

LOVE Madame de Themines, as much as you please ; be constant to her, likewise, as long as you can. It appears perfectly natural to me that you should admire her, that you should adore her, and consecrate your devoirs to her alone. They say she has wit, is certainly an elegant figure, and I have been told, and I believe it, that she has some good qualities. But how is it possible that the happy mortal whom she has preferred, could possibly be led to cast away a moment's consideration, on any other object ? That devoted to an idol, who merits all his homage, he should attempt to win a simple woman's affections, who sought him not, nor ever shewed the least prædilection in his favour ; and who, all coquet as she may be deemed, never put herself to the charge of a single lure to attract him ?

I FANCY you will find it rather difficult to justify yourself, upon this subject ; and
though

though my vanity might possibly receive some degree of gratification, from the attempt, I dispense, most freely dispense, with your vindication. It would lay you under the necessity of dealing falsely, a second time, and I will not expose myself to the mortification of losing all esteem for you.

Adieu, my Lord!



L E T T E R XXVIII.

From Madame de SYRCE,

To Madame de LACÉ.

THE reports which I heard, at the ball, have been confirmed; a person whom I saw, yesterday, told me all the particulars of this amour. It is but too true, that the Count de Mirbelle adores Madame de Themines; but what must appear incredible to you, is, that this very woman is jealous of me—jealous to distraction! and has said every thing that malice could invent of me; but she will not do so any longer. I have written to

Monfieur de Mirbelle, and you will not difapprove my doing fo. I have forbidden him to fee me, any more ; this is acting as I ought to have done. I will never be an obftacle to the happinefs of another. Let them mutually love—let them be happy together ! while my tears flow upon your bofom.

MIRBELLE is then the falseft of his fex ! Alas ! in rejecting his paffion, an homage fo transporting, but now as much detefted, expiring under fo amazing an effort, it was not, however, for myfelf I grieved—That heart, my friend, which he has rent, deferved to have been more highly prized. How I hate the man who has deftroyed my doubts ! Every mifery of a concealed affliction, he has made me fuffer ; and he feemed to dwell with a cruel pleafure, upon all the circumftances of this mortifying relation.

I DID not question him whence proceeded this effufion of the heart, this unfought confidence, this malicious joy ? If he fhould be an emiffary of the Duke's !

If

If I have been deceived!—No matter, I adopt, I embrace, with rapture, every thing that can strengthen my reason, and furnish me with arms against an object too alluring—If it be possible, aggravate his faults, and inspire me with horror, at my own. It is necessary that I should think him guilty; I tremble, lest he should not be so.

My mind is a perfect chaos; my ideas all confused, I cannot separate or distinguish them. Fear, indignation, the violence of my struggles, their inutility, a sort of hope, and a kind of remorse for that hope, the resolution of my projects, the instability of my vows, the misery of not being beloved, and the fear of his not deserving to be so——O my friend, all these arrows are deeply lodged within my breast.

I SHALL see him, then, no more! My letter was very coldly written, hardly civil.—I wish I had not sent it—It would have been better not to have written, at all. This was an unpardonable measure—if
he

he should interpret it to my disadvantage! I am an idiot, I detest myself—Surely I am a pitiable object!—Yet I excite envy! and Madame de Themines is jealous of me!

Adieu, Adieu!



LETTER XXIX.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To Madame de SYRCÉ.

CAN I believe my sight! and is it you, Madam, who have written the letter that contains my fate, in which you have pronounced the severest sentence, and doomed me solely from appearances, which you ought not to have interpreted so cruelly? You have made me feel in the extreme degree, the torment of loving against one's will, of loving without hope, of being condemned to misery, and of being capable of inspiring nothing but disdain; and all that now is left me, is the wretchedness of adoring you still in vain.

No

No, Madam, the man whom you have condemned, and forbidden to see you, who was always displeasing to your sight, is not unworthy of your esteem. In pity to the sincerest sorrow, deign but to listen to me. I do not, now, nor did I ever, love Madame de Themines; I never was so fortunate as to be able to make an offer of sacrificing her to you. If I followed her, at the ball, it must be owing to some delirium, to some inconstancy or other, which it is impossible to account for.

It was you, and you alone, that was, alas! the idol of my worship. I confessed my passion to you, because I could no longer conceal it; and perhaps you would not be insensible to my sufferings, if you could but read my heart, and see how strongly your image is impressed upon it. From the time that I dared to write to you, I have not known a moment's peace; I am certain that my passion can only render me unhappy; but alas! I am not able to oppose my destiny.

ATTRAC-

ATTRACTIONS too powerful to be withstood, dwell on your lips, and in your eyes ; your motion, your discourse, even your very silence, all are irresistible ; you act with the same force on the imagination, as on the senses ; no shield can be interposed to your fascinating charms, it is impossible to elude their enchantment ; an undefinable grace attends your every attitude, and accompanies your every action ; in fine, 'tis impossible for you to do any thing, which is not of itself sufficient to enslave the hearts of all who approach you. If you appear serious, we become enamoured of gravity ; and when you assume cheerfulness again, we rejoice in mirth. You have a thousand modes of pleasing, equally infallible, though different all.

CEASE, ah ! cease to think me false ! Overwhelm me with your severest rigour, but pity me, notwithstanding—you ought, for I deserve it.—There are situations and circumstances, where virtue may become the torment of that heart which cherishes it. Deign, Madam, to recall to your memory

mory the eager anxiousness with which I have ever sought to become acquainted with you; the recollection of my respectful assiduities, may perhaps remind you of your own coldness.—Did I say coldness! rather of that animosity with which you declaimed against me, in a circle who looked up to you as an oracle, and received all their sentiments from your impressions.—You will enjoy the recollection, as an addition to your present vengeance.

WHAT have I done to deserve your hatred? Suffer me, I intreat you, to endeavour to destroy those unjust prepossessions you have formed against me. Since you have interdicted me your presence, in pity to my sufferings, give me leave to write to you, at least. I will not dare to hope for answers to my letters; allow me but an opportunity of repeating to you, a thousand times, how much I am devoted to you. Believe a lover's oath, that Madame de Themines had never any power over my heart; and it is sufficient to be acquainted with you, to be assured she never shall.

L E T-

L E T T E R XXX.

From Madame de SYRCÉ,

To Madame de LACÉ.

LET the whole universe be laid at Madame de Themines's feet; the sole object, in whose fate I am wholly interested, is not, nor ever will be there. He is not guilty.—We have been unjust.—You seemed to accuse him with a spiteful earnestness. More timid than the Duke, you say, he is, to the full, as unprincipled. This suspicion was too cruel—What has he done to offend you? You almost broke my heart.

FORGIVE me, a thousand times, forgive me; I owe you the sincerest gratitude, and I am repaying you with reproaches. I sought the aid and consolation of your friendship, and I now complain that you were kind enough to grant it! I no longer know what I say, or what I would have.—I deserve your pity—you will excuse me, my friend, and not abandon me
to

to the distractions of my mind; much less to the emotions of my heart, which I have more cause to be apprehensive of. It is there the enemy is lodged; it is there his image is engraved too deeply, I fear, ever to be erased.—I am sensible that I was born to adore him, while I live. You now see my weakness, but you shall for the future admire my fortitude.

I LEAVE you at liberty to say all the ill, your conscience will let you, of Monsieur de Mirbelle; but beware of thinking any. He does not love Madame de Themines; I cannot, therefore, conceive her cause of triumph: she is not quite handsome enough to turn people's heads; in truth, I think her but moderately so.—You may be certain that he does not love her; he has sworn to me he does not.—He has so much honour, and such an appearance of sincerity, that it would be impossible to doubt him.—The stile of his last letter has affected me extremely; it paints the tender sorrow of his heart, which is now transferred to mine.

My

My friend, my dearest friend! how dangerous is he become, now that I have nothing to reproach him with! He desires leave to write to me. After my unjust suspicion, ought I to wound him further with a refusal which might drive him to despair? What will he think of it? I cannot determine upon any thing.—How painful is the strife, between prudence and passion! What trouble will it cost me, to hide mine! It increases every moment, and triumphs over my reason.—Alas! I have none left. I see, as it were through a mist, the formidable duties which bind me.—You have yourself loved; you will retrace your former situation, in the picture of my present one.

How can we avoid loving? Unhappy as we are! Those to whom our parents surrender us, either tyrannize over, or abandon us. Our sole relief, in either of these cases, is our tears: we for a while find some in them; by degrees they become less frequent; repeated insults dry their source; the heart, fatigued with ineffectual sorrow, forms pleasing visions to itself,

itself, and seeks an object that may realize them.

THE wished chimera, the mistaken idol, at length, appears; emotion and confusion announce its presence; one fears, and flies from it, but even in our flight we meet it still; the arts of seduction cover the purposed injury, and we become less guarded, every day; till standing on the very brink of the precipice, we only see the flowers that conceal it. Alas! how is it possible to escape, surrounded with smiling snares, on one hand, and by unkindness, pressed into the toils, on the other? We are always more to be pitied, than condemned, as our faults generally arise more from our misfortunes, than our vice.

ADIEU! I willingly accept of all the miseries which attend on love; the effects will be dear to me, on account of the cause.

P. S. I have, this moment, recollected that I am under a necessity of replying to

to Monsieur de Mirbelle; he has been told that I have said the most horrid things of him! There are odious people in the world! It would be dreadful to leave him under this mistake.—He believes that I detest him! Yes, he believes it! O he shall never read my heart! at least I hope so.—But there is no law in morals, which can oblige me to hate him, or suffer him to think I do so.



LETTER XXXI.

From Madame de SYRCÉ,

To the Count de MIRBELLE.

I THINK it necessary to answer your Lordship's letter, as I wish to vindicate myself from an accusation, or rather contradict a falsehood, contained in it. It may be possible to be more delicate, upon such a subject, but it would be difficult to be more sincere. Most certainly it is not true that I spoke ill of you, in any circle. You have been imposed upon, you have been credulous, and

and above all, unjust to yourself. I can hardly pardon you this error. I shall be more indulgent, as far as I am myself personally concerned.

I PERCEIVE that you are totally ignorant of my character; they have given you a false idea of me; perhaps you should not so readily have adopted it. I am not indifferent, with regard to your opinion of me --- I am pleased at having an opportunity of telling you that I detest every species of calumny, and pity those who are capable of it; the persecution I have suffered from it, myself, has not yet soured my temper.

BE assured, my Lord, that I have ever been tender of the absent; I would not speak severely of them, though they had even offended me: if they had virtues, I would acknowledge them; one may do justice to merits, without abating their resentment of injuries. Nay, I can take the part of women, though ever so handsome; I speak with favour even of the faulty, and with fondness of the more perfect.—

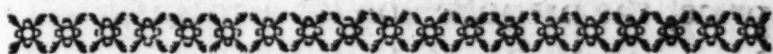
fect.—You had reason, then, rather to have expected my elogy, if ever I had mentioned your name.

I HAD almost forgotten to speak of Madame de Themines to you.—There is no end of explanations.—What can I say, on this subject? I gave credit to the public report, at first; perhaps I should be in the right, were I to continue to do so. You have assured me that you do not love her; what then! One is so often deceived: that it is hardly possible to believe any thing one hears.—But what makes you so anxious about the matter? As for my part, I cannot retain any further suspicion, without injuring your honour.—So let us talk no more of the matter.

YOUR requesting permission to write to me, has extremely embarrassed me.—Circumstanced as I am, should I refuse, you will persist in thinking me your enemy; you will suppose that my hatred is implacable, and I should then become a just object of your resentment.

WELL,

WELL, Sir, I shall afford you this proof of my esteem, and the stile of your letters will inform me whether you are worthy of it.



LETTER XXXII.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Chevalier de GERAC.

YOUR letters oppose me, my dear Chevalier, but your silence afflicts me.—It is all over, I am now irrevocably attached—I have written to her, and been answered, too.—But, alas! what are our enjoyments, when attended with remorse? That which I feel, is horrible, indeed! I languish after what I dread to obtain; I fear the being happy, and yet tremble lest I should not be so.

I HAVE received the most affecting letter, from Lady Sidley—I almost defaced the writing with my tears.—Like the Hyæna, I first weep, and then betray! She is incapable of suspicion, she kisses the hand

that is raised to plunge a dagger in her bosom, she is far from thinking me inhuman—How unfortunate is her situation! but is not mine still more so? Nevertheless, if my present passion be only a caprice, the prepossession of a moment——Madame de Syrcé doubtless is such as she has been described, and in this case, as you have already said, her reign will be but short; and that once over, my Sidley's shall begin again. •

—How beautiful was the Marchioness, at the last ball! How infinitely superior to every woman there! How totally did she eclipse them all! And yet, wretch that I am! I am reduced to wish that this charming object may be deficient in honour, in principles, and degrade herself by a momentary foible, without having even the excuse of passion, to plead in her defence.

THE more I am attached to the virtues of the one, the more I am compelled to wish the other may have none! I am ashamed of my own baseness, I blush,
and

and yet persist. — Fatal delirium of the human heart ! inexplicable weakness ! Pity your friend, my dear G rac ! — But I exaggerate my failings ; who is without them ? Even you, in my situation, would act as I have done. — Is it so great a crime to aspire to the possession of the most lovely woman upon earth ? We are too rigid ; Pleasure is the deity of youth ; to him we ought to sacrifice ; nor is cold reason virtue.



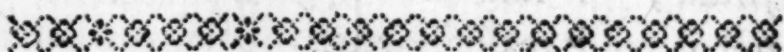
LETTER XXXIII.

From the Chevalier de GERAC,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

YOU weep, you blush, your soul is sorrowful, and yet you continue to persist in your former resolutions ! To what purpose then serve those secret hints, which you receive from that delicate and just monitor, your own heart ? If they have lost the rein, what restraint can I further supply ? But the season of advice is past ; it is the voice of friendship only, that can now be heard ; it is hers, to com-

fort the heart she cannot cure. — I would most willingly sacrifice many of the happy days of my own life, to save you from some of those wretched ones, which may probably attend on yours. The folly of a moment has often been the source of tears, which time itself could never dry. — May I be mistaken, and may you be happy!



L E T T E R XXXIV.

From the Duke de VILLENEUVE,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

WELL, my Lord, did I deceive myself? And has the ball failed of its effect! I was very certain she would write to you.—Every thing is now made easy, and you remain master of the field. You may now proceed as briskly as you please, and not weary one another with the tedious formality of a first address. Let me intreat you not to be too prodigal of your letters; if you answer one in four that you receive, it will be quite sufficient; but more especially, avoid all parade of sentiment.

You may pretend to be angry, affronted, and to reproach her, and be sure not to fail insisting on her justification.— Women are never on their guard when they write; they furnish arms against themselves, they become familiar with the tender passions, and inditing to the lover, the pen always turns to an arrow against their own breasts. We lay hold of every thing they say, interpret as we please, date the progress of their passion, and are able almost to name the day of surrender, at the time they think the least about it.

THE King sets out, on a party, for eight days; he goes to —; I shall follow him, and remain there, during that time. At my return I hope you will have brought this matter to a conclusion, for surely, you have time enough to effect it. I allow you a whole week, that you may act according to the exactest rules of decorum. After that we shall have nothing to think of but the mode of publication, which is more essential than is generally imagined.—I will take charge of the whole of that business, only letting you

into the secret of that kind of artful indiscreet silence, which dishonours the women, while it leaves us the merit of behaving well.

YOUR Englishwoman, then, will admit of no *tête-à-tête*, with me, you say—She is certainly a mere savage! Adieu.



L E T T E R X X X V .

From the Marchioness de SYRCE,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

WHAT is it you complain of? I have permitted you to write to me, and have at last promised to answer your letter. This is doing more, perhaps, than I ought, and certainly is all that I can allow you; but you are unreasonable, extremely so, and that disposition is revolting. Good! I had almost forgotten another cause of resentment, I have against you! How comes one to forget things of this kind? And so, Sir, “It is from pride, then, as much as from reason, that I fear to love.” What a charming idea! and how very advantageous

geous to me! Let us pass lightly over this reproach.

My table, my toilet, (let me tell you this latter is a serious business) you say, entirely engross me.—Learn from me, that I am actuated by principles which are not known, and that my outward appearance is, by no means, to be relied on.—Prithee, never tell me again, that love is a beautifier, that it gives a charming expression to the eyes, and renders the whole person interesting.—Notwithstanding this curious discovery, my heart shall preserve its freedom; but if I should ever be so unhappy as to lose it, I should not find the smallest consolation, from such trifling advantages.

You ask me if I shall be at home, this evening? Yes, for I have a severe head-ach, and therefore shall not go out. Besides, I want to scold you; I am by no means satisfied with your letters; though they are charming, I am angry at them. You have, already, far exceeded the bounds within which you promised to restrain your correspondence.

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L E T T E R XXXVI.

From the Marchioness de SYRCÉ,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

WHAT a mighty pleasant visit you honoured me with yesterday ! How very trifling, nay improper, was your conversation ? Do not think, my Lord, that I shall quickly forget it. You presumed to tell me that you loved me ! Had I been inclined to believe you, (but you know the contrary) I should have been covered with confusion—For four hours together, you talked to me of nothing but my charms, the desires which they inspired, of the poignant delights of infidelity, and the pleasures of inconstancy ; and all this, with a warmth as unbecoming, even as the subjects of your discourse.

PLEASE to let me know, I demand it, what you have discovered in my conduct, that could authorise such a conversation ? I received the declaration of your love, without resentment ; but, as well as I remember, with the most perfect indifference.

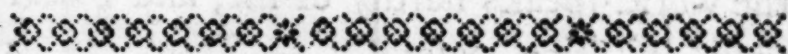
rence. One may act strictly up to their duty, without affectation, without ill-temper, without vain ostentation.—If I am at all acquainted with her, Virtue is mild, her enjoyments are confined to the heart which she inhabits, and her pleasures secret.

It is true, indeed, I have answered some of your letters; I thought I might safely do so, and that this proof of my esteem, would augment yours.—I know also that the world speaks hardly of me, and I bear their injustice patiently. — Your sex is vain; mine, envious; yours cannot forgive a denial, mine wish to monopolize adoration, and charm with an exclusive privilege.—When these motives of resentment are united, they give birth to slander; which imposes on weak minds, who far outnumber the rest of human-kind.

BUT there are some noble souls, that are not carried away by the torrent, who give themselves the trouble of examining coolly into motives, credit only undoubted facts,

and who, when once they have formed them, adhere to their opinions. Such were the sentiments I expected to find in you—it seems I have been mistaken.

ADIEU, my Lord! how vastly should I have been indebted to you, had it been necessary to have put me on my guard, against your kind of passion—Happily that was needless—I say happily, because it sets bounds to my acknowledgments.



L E T T E R XXXVII.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Marchioness de SYRCÉ.

DO not, Madam, strive to overwhelm an unhappy wretch, who is already more miserable than you can conceive.—He has displeased you, his own heart is your avenger. If you could have looked into that, even in the moment he held the conversation which has raised your resentment against him, you would then have

have known how very far he was from meaning to offend you. I was no longer master of myself; the charms of your conversation, those of your person, inflamed my senses, deprived me of my reason, and threw me into such an extasy as I never had before experienced.

YES, I then said, that the most adored mistress in the universe, would have every thing to fear, were you to become her rival; and that inconstancy, though ever a crime in love, would cease to be deemed so, were you the cause and object of it.—What can I say, but that I was born to idolize you? Even your severity cannot subdue my passion—If you knew all that I have done to conquer the ascendant you have over me, you would pity me; you would think me worthy of your indulgence, rather than your resentment, and would be shocked at knowing the distractions of my mind.

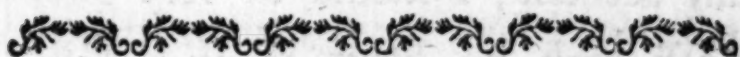
WHAT a letter have you written! your contempt alone, was wanting to complete my misery! your contempt! and do

I live to know that you despise me! yet sinking under that mortification, I prefer it to the doubts which you express of my esteem.—Can you suppose it possible that I should be insensible to that devoir? I who discover every day in you, such qualities as increase my passion, but augment my despair, and render me a wretch indeed!

I ALMOST wish that I had never seen you—I wish—O pardon the extravagance of love, of grief, and of remorse—my anguish is extreme! O deign to mix your tears with mine! but hide them from me! Were I to see that your compassion had extorted but a single drop, I could no longer answer for myself.—Yes, madam, know that your indifference is not sufficient, but that your hatred is necessary to compel me to obedience—to make me hide the insurmountable passion, the ardent vows, which you disdain to accept, and are offended even at the mention of.

YET suffer me to see you once more, this night—deign to be witness of my sorrow;

sorrow; it will soften your resentment, if you are not inexorable—Fear not, that now, or ever, I shall presume to speak to you again of love—I shall summon fortitude sufficient to suffer in silence, and submit to your decrees, as to those celestial intelligences, who are adored in thought alone. In confidence of this strong effort, do not refuse me this small request.



L E T T E R XXXVIII.

From the Marchioness de SYRCÉ,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

I Answered your last letter, I believed your penitence sincere, and yet you seem to be dissatisfied! For Heaven's sake, get the better of your chagrin, and do not appear to be always unhappy.—I am far from being insensible to the misfortunes of my friends—you say that I make no allowance for their foibles: but do I not do justice to their merits? and if I am apt to offend them, by my frankness, I have

have honour and resolution sufficient to defend them from others.

FOR instance, I maintain to all the world, that you are a very sensible man, and yet you know that I could prove the contrary, if I pleased.—What was the matter with you, yesterday? you were so woe begone! I cannot set this down to my account; I should be very sorry to have been the cause of it. Without doubt, it is not in my power to conquer your melancholy; I conjure you, therefore, to think of me only as a friend—I should be miserable at giving you the smallest pain.

NOTWITHSTANDING your sollicitations, I did not go to the opera, last night—don't you think that I am a little whimsical?

LETTER

LETTER XXXIX.

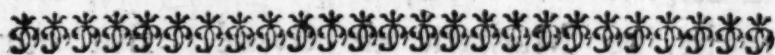
From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Chevalier de GERAC.

AFTER all you said to me, in the morning, I paid a visit, last night, to Madame de Syrcé. But our conversation, though the most lively that we have had since this unfortunate attachment, weighed heavy on my heart. I was so melancholy that she perceived it, and reproached me with it by a note this morning; and even her reproof serves but to encrease it.

My friend! my only friend! how powerfully persuasive is the voice of friendship, when it speaks the language of virtue, without assuming its severity! It is over. Were I to die in the conflict, (and I am not far from wishing to do so) I voluntarily condemn myself to the most cruel, and most painful sacrifice. — My soul, brave as it is, trembles at the effort, which it has imposed upon itself. No
matter,

matter, I will be a man, and learn to suffer.—To save my Sidley's tears, let mine overflow—I will act with honour, my friend shall be satisfied with my conduct—I go, this moment, to the combat; though firmly resolute, I weep my future triumph. Adieu.



LETTER XL.

From Madame de SYRCE,

To Madame de LACÉ.

EIGHT days have passed, since I have seen him! I am sunk into the lowest dejection; every thing distresses and afflicts me—I go abroad in hopes of meeting him, I stay at home in expectation of his coming—I write to him every moment, and burn my letters, as soon as they are written.—How has he embittered my days!—he makes me feel all the extremes of grief—I am far from thinking myself happy, that I have no farther conflict to sustain; by quitting the combat, he has killed me! I fear him, yet he flies me!

me! and I grow weaker, from his very flight! O my friend! if he has deceived me! if he loves Madame de Themines! I cannot support the idea--my jealousy, from being concealed, operates more powerfully; it turns upon myself alone, and tears my heart.

O HEAVENS, it is, it must be true! my fate is then fixed! How can I doubt his falsehood! During this everlasting week, which I have passed without beholding him, I have gone into twenty houses without meeting either him, or Madame de Themines. They love, their happiness is centered in each other, they have withdrawn themselves from the croud, to indulge their mutual fondness.

THE Count de Mirbelle, doubtless, thought that he might give way a little to a transitory liking for me, but finding that I considered his perfidious declaration of more importance than he meant it, he has resumed his former chains, and I am now perhaps the object of his contempt--- Cruel man! what have I done to offend him!

him ! except opposing the real scruples of an honest heart, without the smallest taint of coquetry or art, to his pretended ardor?

HE does not know how wretched he has made me. My heart is shut, for ever, against every image, but his own---my youth shall all be wasted in the languor of that ill-requited passion, which has concentrated all my ideas, absorbed my wishes, and which shall warm my latest sigh.—— It is thus I love ! it is thus we ought to love, when virtue claims a part, even of our passions.

FROM you I have received these sentiments, my tender friend ! Love must be either the torment, or disgrace, of every female heart. If its excess can plead in its excuse, I have no cause to blush---I renounce the world, friendship alone remains for me ; I throw myself upon your bosom, I repose my tears, my weakness, all the secrets of a heart that is not understood, on that soft sanctuary.

ADIEU—

ADIEU---write to me-- your letters are soothing, they are my only consolation! But can they heal my sorrow? O never! I should not love them half so much, if it were possible they could render me insensible to my misery!



LETTER XLI.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Chevalier de GÉRAC.

LEARN what I have done, applaud my intention, my efforts, and place the rest of my story to the account of fatality. I am doomed to be faithless, even while I weep over the virtuous object of my sacrifice. I have already informed you of my having hazarded a confession of my love to the Marchioness. I ought not to have risked it; but encouraged by this first step, and perhaps from fancying that I perceived some favourable dispositions in her towards me, my assiduities became more ardent, more lively, and were accompanied with that sort of precipitation, which

which is by no means flattering to the object that inspires it, as it seems to arise from an appetite, rather than a passion, which one wishes to indulge, even at the expence of delicacy or decorum.

BUT how was I surprized ! your conjectures about her are true *; Madame de Syrcé is not what people think her.---Her letters, her conversation, breath the soul of virtue---I think her sensible---her head is giddy, but her heart a treasure—it is from thence she borrows that sweet eloquence, that unaffected innocence, that steals away our hearts, and makes her be adored.

JUDGE of my astonishment, my shame, and my remorse---I blushed at my temerity, and the more I discovered the perfections of this inexplicable woman, the more I strove to detach myself from her. At last, after many painful struggles, I resolved neither to see, or write to her, any more.---I laboured to forget her, and fan-

* See Letter XVIII.

cied I had the power of doing so.---During this time I redoubled my attentions to Lady Sidley ; she never was more calm, nor ever expressed more affection for me. ---Alas ! the bandage is still upon her eyes---she smiles on the perfidious wretch who deceives her-- she smiles--- while he assassinate her.

I WAS a thousand times upon the point of confessing to her my guilt, but was as often restrained, by the fear of driving her to desperation.---How cruel is it to draw tears from those eyes, that are sparkling with joy ! to substitute a painful truth, in the room of a sweet illusion, and to enlighten a mind, which derives its happiness from its ignorance !---I had not power to do so.

MEANTIME, the image of Madame de Syrcé haunted me---she appeared to me more interesting, more lovely, than ever. --- I re-read her charming letters, and in the same moment, full of indignation against myself, I have gone to throw myself at Lady Sidley's feet. I shed some of those

those tender tears, that naturally flow for the loss of a passion which we once held dear.—These fond memorials which ought to have alarmed, appeared to her but the effusions of my happiness and love: When these emotions of a disordered mind had subsided, I thought my triumph was secure; I strengthened myself in my resolutions, I conned over your advice, I consulted my own heart: every thing declared itself in favour of Sidley.

BUT yesterday, my friend (that day, the decisive epocha of my misfortunes), I went to sup with Madame de Ferlai. The Marchioness was there---I did not expect to meet her; I trembled at her presence, and was more confused than it is possible to imagine---she turned her eyes upon me; they neither expressed resentment or disdain, but a soft melancholy which pierced my soul—the tenderness and languor they betrayed, was irresistible.--At supper I affected to be chearful, and strove to divert her, but in vain.

WHEN

INCONSTANCY.

WHEN the company retired, I conducted her to her carriage, and ventured to make some sort of excuses, in those half formed sentences, which proceed directly from the heart.---She did not answer me a single word---I have dared to interpret her silence, and have just written her a letter, dictated by love, by grief, regret, and all the transports of unbounded passion..+Such, alas! is that with which she has inspired me.

It is too violent, I hope, to be lasting.---The tenderness which I feel for Lady Sidley, is habitual to my soul; it will be still dearer, too, when this delirium shall be passed-- at least, I wish it may--How horrible is my situation! all opposition now is vain---I must submit to my fate---may I be its only victim!

ADIEU! if you condemn my conduct, my frankness has yet a right to claim your friendship.

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L E T T E R XLII.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE,

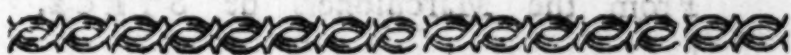
To the Count de MIRBELLE.

WARMTH of expression is by no means a proof of sincerity.---No, my Lord, I can no longer credit any thing you say. But wherefore should you take the trouble of justifying yourself? You are not bound to make excuses, or express regret, to me --your conduct appears extremely natural; you promised to behave with greater temperance, towards me, and you have kept your word. I have not the least reason to complain of it. Perhaps, too, you have acted in obedience to Madame de Themines, and I have no right to disapprove any part of your conduct, but your seeming to return to me.

DECEIVE her not---never again deceive her---deceit is odious---I will not receive you, for I should be extremely sorry to be
the

the cause of grief or anxiety to her. You are not quite so delicate; and if I had been weak enough to have been affected by appearances, I don't fancy you would have given yourself more trouble to preserve them, for my sake, than you have done, for hers.

LEARN to be more sincere with other women. You should strive to know the heart you venture to attack; without this precaution, you run the hazard of being worse than indiscreet, you risque the being a barbarian.



L E T T E R XLIII.

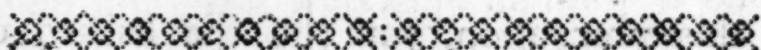
From the Marchioness de SYRCE,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

I DO not know why your letter of-day, should be more persuasive, than that of yesterday, but that it is less extravagant, and therefore seems to be more sincere. I am weary of talking to you about Madame de Themines. It is then

VOL. I. L certain,

certain, that she is not the object that keeps you at a distance from your friends; you swear it, and intreat me to believe you. Granting this true, what service can this do you? You intreat, you implore me, with the utmost earnestness, to see you.—Well, my Lord, I shall be visible at eight this evening; you will have time to make your visits before then—for I suppose that you are much engaged.



L E T T E R XLIV.

From the Marchioness de SYRCÉ,
To Count de MIRBELLE.

MY letters, you say, seldom exceed four lines; be satisfied, this shall tire you. I did not answer yours, this morning, but am now set down to it. I had a thousand things to embarrass me, and could not find sufficient leisure to write so as to please myself—perhaps that would take more time than you are aware of.

You

You complain of my severity and my prudence; I acknowledge and rejoice in them both, and I wish you would conquer the habit you have acquired, of being so mortally offended at them. I shall never dispute whether they proceed from coldness, or are the fruits of reflection; perfectly satisfied with the effects, I shall not contend about the cause. I must, however, beg leave to do justice to my sex. Do not deny us the power of combating our affections, of triumphing over our inclinations, and of concealing even our sufferings!

THE men, unjust as they are, and unacquainted with sorrow; these cruel men, I say, who judge so ill, and deceive so well, who make laws for themselves, and to whom it is no reproach to love; are so accustomed to exaggerate their sentiments, that they cannot conceive an idea of our doing violence to ours—and yet there are women, who shed tears that are not seen to flow, who hide the bitterest anguish under an appearance of the most perfect ease, who controul their passions, in spite of those

rebellious pangs that tear their hearts, which, with all their pains, they may not, perhaps, always be able to subdue.

YET, after all, you will venture to dispute our fortitude ! This provokes me. But I am by no means interested in this subject, and you will deceive yourself extremely, if you should make the smallest application upon the occasion. What I have said, is merely the result of our yesterday's conversation, and of some vague ideas, with which your letter of this morning has inspired me.

FOR Heaven's sake, let us talk of something else ; this text gives me the vapours : I know not why I have dwelt upon it, for, in truth, I dislike it as much as I do the great man, with whom we supped, last night. He is a bad mimic of your other friend, the Duke de Ville-neuve ; he pronounces with a decisive and supercilious air, speaks well of himself, and slightingly of every one else.

You

You think, perhaps, that creature has a soul—It is impossible! How he talked of women! I heard him expatiating to you, on the pleasures of inconstancy; the delight of appearing innocent to her you would betray; of conveying the poison of perfidy into the bosom of love, and breaking the heart which is devoted to you.

THESE shocking pleasures may have charms for him; they seem well suited to his hellish nature. But how was it possible for you, while with an oracular decision he delivered these precious maxims, while I yawned, and that no other creature besides attended to his discourse; how was it possible, I ask again, that you could not only listen, but sometimes smile? You never once contradicted him, and your silence seemed to carry an air of approbation in it!

ALL men are alike; warm in their love, but cold in their esteem: our value with them, remains not after possession; and they think they have sufficiently paid our price with a little of that false coin,

called adoration, which they deprive us of with the same facility with which they bestowed it.

THEY allow us beauty; their compliment extends no further: they fall at our feet; and why, or wherefore, do they condescend to such humility? Just as those infidels do, who have no faith in a divinity, till they stand in need of its assistance—Their adoration is momentary, their ingratitude perpetual, and their injustice is at all times but delayed.—It is absolutely necessary to fly such enemies. Adieu, my Lord.

P. S. I AM frightened at the enormous length of my letter, and at the severe things I have said in it.—Do you know that you have some friends who give me but a very middling idea of your sensibility?

LETTER

LETTER XLV.

From the Duke de VILLENEUVE,

To the Count de MIRBELLE.

OUR journey has been longer than I expected, but at length I am arrived; and my first care has been to inform myself of your progress, or rather of your triumph—But what can be the meaning that there is not the least rumour of it? Are all the folks in Paris grown dumb? I have been every where, and every where have met with the profoundest silence, upon this article. Is it possible that your adventure is not yet concluded? What else could have prevented its having transpired? I have given the alarm, and set every one on the watch; and luckily for you, I am arrived time enough, I hope, to save you from further indiscretions.

I TREMBLE lest you should be drawn into a sentimental passion—I am afraid of it. Madame de Syrcé has found out your

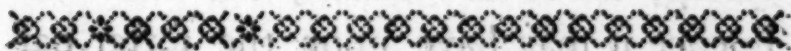
foible, and has imposed upon you.—She may perhaps have had art enough to persuade you of her virtue; she is capable of making the attempt, and you as likely to be deceived into the opinion.

I BEGIN to fear that she may, at last, inspire you with a passion for her. What a figure would you then make! Once more, I tell you, make an end of this affair, or you will be ruined by your ridiculous and tedious delicacy.—Must I speak plainer to you?—Madame de Syrcé has been every body's Cleopatra, except your own. Till now, I have been circumspect, and tender of her reputation; but I am interested in your danger, and disgusted by her artifice.

THINK seriously of this matter; your reputation ought to be dearer to you, than hers: I would sacrifice the honour of twenty such women, to that of one worthy man.—I am the more pressing on this subject, as you have been already too much exposed, and are very near becoming the laughing-stock of a world that
never

never spares those who have once been made its jest.

YOUR Englishwoman then persists in my exclusion; I am sorry for it, upon your account; but I comfort myself for losing the pleasure of her acquaintance, by that of seeing you inconstant.—Be brisk, for your own satisfaction, as well as mine; give me the earliest notice of your success; it is essential that I should know it. If I should be absent, dispatch a courier to me.—When the exposing of a woman's weakness is in question, one cannot be too diligent.



LETTER XLVI.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE,

To Madame de LACÉ.

YOU know that my mother is gone to her seat in the country. It is the first time she ever went without me.—I resisted her entreaties, I pretended business that would necessarily confine me to

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Paris;

Paris ; her goodness made her consent to my stay, and the innocence of her heart prevented her suspecting my real motives for desiring it.—She is so far from thinking ill of any one, that she would tremble at entertaining even a suspicion. Happy being ! whose inward consciousness inclines her to suppose the whole world to be virtuous.

A CHARMING tye has bound me to this spot ; but the more my heart is enchanted, the more my reason is alarmed, by it.—Behold me, then, left to myself, alone with love and weakness ! The return of spring, the lover's season, the secret influence it may have upon the softer passions, have given me reflections which much disturb me. I have no longer before me the strict example of a respectable, and tenderly beloved mother—I find myself now, for the first time, left in the world without support or stay. At the very instant of my mother's departure, I was forcibly struck with the idea of the danger that threatens me ; I wept in her arms, and could hardly withdraw myself
from

from that hallowed sanctuary; I lamented at quitting it, and felt how much occasion I had for such an asylum.

SINCE she has been gone, the Count de Mirbelle's visits are become more frequent; I sometimes see him *tête-a-tête*; he appears to be sincere, and has inspired me with a dangerous confidence in him. O my Friend, I must fly his converse; I must break through the enchantment that surrounds me!—How can I hope to conquer him I love, when I only feel the lassitude and weariness of withstanding the siege?

My resolution is taken. The old Marshal d'Albret, who you know is always dying, is at his charming country seat, and is almost alone; I will go and keep him company; I can think upon my lover with more pleasure, when I have less reason to fear him. The Marshal writes me word that he has no Ladies with him but the Duchess d'Aguillon. She never leaves him, and I shall therefore be at liberty to

seek my own amusements. I shall write to you, and in the reliefs of absence, solitude, and reflection, I may, perhaps, find arms against my passion.

I THINK of setting out, the day after to-morrow; I fear to let the Count de Mirbelle know my intentions; I will manage so that he shall not suspect them—He would fall at my feet, I should hear his sighs, I should see his tears—and remain where I am.



L E T T E R XLVII.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Marchioness de SYRCE.

CAN it be true! I saw you yesterday—you determined to quit Paris, and never mentioned a syllable of your resolution to me! I wake as from a dream! How have I offended you? and wherefore do you fly me? You say you have occasion for the calm repose of the country, and you do not even seem to think upon
the

the agitation under which you leave me. Forgive me, Madam! Ought I to question your conduct? Have I a right to complain? or what have I to reproach you with, except your indifference?

BUT on my part, what have you to upbraid me with? You accuse me of murmuring, of impatience, and of not being master of myself. But how is it possible to preserve one's temper with you? Nothing can persuade, nothing can fix you—You are always on the wing, and tho' gentle, you are obstinate—You seem inclined to act like other people, yet never do any thing but what your own caprice determines you to. But what does all this signify, while I live but to adore you! Such is my destiny, such your ascendant,—such my misfortune. I idolize even your failings, and I should plead in their excuse, if you were inclined to part with them.

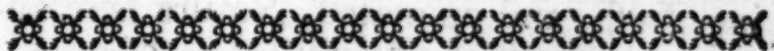
I CANNOT get over your making a mystery of your intended journey: this, then, was the cause of that constraint, which

which reigned in your conversation, yesterday.—How I detest that embarrassment which seems to confine your thoughts, when we are together; that stops upon your timid lips those soft confessions, which your heart, perhaps, would not condemn! How I hate those secret struggles of a heart that seems to bestow, and withhold itself, in the same moment! Credit your friend and lover; prejudices are our greatest enemies, our tyrants; they embitter our happiness and destroy our pleasures. I defy them, I abhor and trample them under my feet. I abandon myself to that delirium which is warm and blind as love, and which with an impassioned hand repels the antiquated and four aspect of stern philosophy.

O THOU, to whom every faculty of my soul is devoted! thou whom I should not love, yet doat on to distraction! O deign to become sensible, at least, of that passion which thou opposest with such rigour and disdain! Say, can you doubt my love? Be certain, very certain, that in adoring
you

you I but obey an irresistible attraction.
—I suffer every thing, I exact nothing.

WHEN will you return? Heavens, in what a situation have you abandoned me! Your absence, perhaps—In pity do not prolong it; and in order to grant my request, forget that it was I who made it—Adieu, most cruel Fair!



LETTER XLVIII.

From the Marchioness de SYRCE,

To Madame de LACÉ.

WHAT signifies all that I have done? or what avails a few days absence, against a fond impression which I have vainly combated? It is impossible to fly from him we love; passion bestows ubiquity, and we meet him every where! and that image which our fancy supplies and adorns, is to the full as dangerous as the real object.

To

To you, my friend, I will confess my weakness; I read over his letters, and recollect every word he ever spoke to me; trembling I pronounce his name, but so low, that none can hear me. I could not express the sound, without such a degree of emotion as must be visible to all who heard and saw me.

THIS place is enchanting! How blooming, fresh, and animated, Nature here appears! Yet spite of all the pleasures that surround me, my heart flies back towards Paris; it is sensible of an anxious void, yet cannot tell what it desires.

I AM very happy that the Count is not acquainted with the Marshal d'Albret; this delightful abode, embellished by the presence of my lover, would become formidable to me. But, alas! shall I always be able to resist him? I shudder at what passes in my heart; my passion tyrannizes over me, and has subdued every faculty of my soul. I seek repose in vain—solitude but nourishes my agitation, and sleep increases it.

My

My friend, my tender friend, I feel a languor, a weariness of every thing, and an inquietude of mind that alarms and terrifies me.—What mean these secret impulses, which prompt us towards a happiness we dread, and purchase so dearly beforehand by the tears which precede it? Let me hide myself in your bosom, and blush for the confession I have made. Friendship will plead my excuse; I shall find favour before that tribunal!

How charming are his letters, and how much am I embarrassed when I sit down to answer them! I begin, perhaps, ten times, and am always dissatisfied with what I have written. The fear of betraying my passion, that of afflicting him, every thing distracts me; even the excess of his love: I feel myself a wretch, whenever I think him unhappy.

L E T.

L E T T E R XLIX.

From Madame de SYRCE,

To Count de MIRBELLE.

I DID not enter into the motive of my departure, with your Lordship, as I did not think it necessary to acquaint you with my design of setting out. I now repeat what I have already told you, that I have, for some time past, felt the most impatient desire for retirement and repose. Every one knows what is necessary to their own happiness.—Your letters help to amuse me agreeably here, except where you mention a passion, which I ought not to approve; I read them with pleasure,—a pleasure not mixed with fear, or apprehension.

IN my present situation, every thing pleases, and nothing alarms me; I enjoy the most perfect liberty. The Marshal was extremely glad to see me; he has no company, but some of the neighbouring Gentlemen, and the Duchefs d'Aguillon, who, notwithstanding her asthma, which has rendered her the peevishest mortal.

upon

upon earth, spends the little remainder of her breath, in contradicting me, the whole day long. She is for ever founding the praises of her female coteremporaries; though it is not so much their eulogium that is intended, as a satire against the women of these days.—But I am mild and gentle, perhaps too much so; and let her say what she pleases. In the evening, we play at *Comète*. She has the most extraordinary good luck at it; I never win: this circumstance softens her severity towards me, a little, and she thinks me delightful—at *Comète*.

My present habitation is the loveliest spot in the world. Were I to attempt a description of it, you would take it for Fairy-land—In some places, Nature is adorned by the hand of Taste, and embellished with the riches of Art; in others, she seems to be totally left to herself, and there

—“ She wantons as in her prime,
“ And plays at will her virgin fancies.”

The water, as in most of our improvements, is not confined in a narrow basin,
but

but flows in its natural state a noble river thro' the gardens, on which we frequently sail in beautiful *Gondola's*.—I must not forget a labyrinth, which seems to have been formed by enchantment; I find all my caution and attention necessary to prevent my losing myself in it. All the gay flowers of the spring bloom there, and all the sweet songsters of the woods seem to have chosen it for their aviary. The walks which surround it are bordered on each side by a double row of beautiful shells, thro' which a serpentine stream sparkles away over golden sands, emulating those of Pactolus.—The statues, though fine, represent only fictions, for they are all yielding Ladies.—I hate such sarcasms. They take care to commemorate our foibles, but where are the monuments that should be erected to our virtues? This is the fault of your sex, not ours.

I FORGET whereabouts I was; but Heaven forbid that I should write methodically! I hasten to arrive at the enchanting grotto, that terminates the labyrinth.

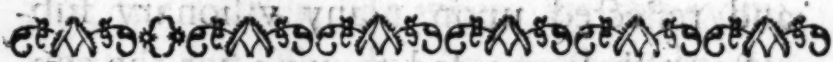
labyrinth. In that charming scene, one seems to be secluded from the whole universe; they tread on beds of roses, and are crowned also with wreaths of them. I retire thither, often, particularly when the sun declines, and the mild breeze of evening breathes around. Its charms attract me, its solitude detains me; it is formed for contemplation, and one muses—upon what they will.

TALKING of reveries, which are our waking dreams, recalls a sleeping one I had, last night, which I attribute to the romantic idea, with which this scene had inspired me, during the day.—I imagined myself in a gloomy arbor, where I thought and reflected upon many visionary subjects, till I was led to wish for the conversation of a Sylph—a real one. Upon the instant, a spirit of that order appeared to me; he descended from a golden cloud, and was cloathed in a vestment of bright azure blue; his figure—but I shall not forget, tho' I cannot describe it. His looks were full of tenderness, unmixed with ardor or impatience; the sound of his voice,

voice, tho' soft and sweet, penetrated to my heart; he asked for nothing, he only desired permission to love.

He was beginning to instruct me in the manners of the Sylphs, and the purity of their affections. I even think that he spoke ill of men. I listened to him attentively, and was pleased with hearing him, when one of the women came into my chamber to wake me. Adieu, my Sylph—and I regret him truly.

P. S. You ask me when I shall return to Paris. I cannot answer you, for I do not yet know, myself. I wait till you grow reasonable.



L E T T E R L.

From Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Chevalier de GERAC.

THE most singular and daring idea has taken absolute possession of my mind, and I will execute it. I can no longer

longer exist, without seeing the Marchioness; I know the imprudence of my scheme, but the excess of my anxiety justifies it. It is impossible that Madame de Syrcé should really be what she appears to me; in that case she would be too adorable. But I will no longer bear the being preyed on by the doubts and apprehensions that tear my heart. I would rather even displease her. I am resolved to risque every thing. You know my heart; it is weak, yet ardent; its inclinations are impatient of controul, its desires violent; they must be satisfied, tho' I should hereafter be condemned to repent my indulging them, to weep over my errors, and submit the rest of my life to the remonstrances of my friend—I go—Adieu!

LET.

LETTER LI.

From the Count de MIRBELLE,

To the Chevalier de GÉRAC.

NEVER speak ill of her to me, again. I adore, I idolize her;—the enthusiasm of my fondness has survived such a degree of happiness, as I could scarcely form an idea of. Where am I? How shall I paint the agitations of my mind, or express its transports? You must partake of the extasy, the intoxication, the enchantment, of your friend.

My journey, yesterday, was to the Chateau d'Albret, where she is, at present. She wrote me word, the day before, that she had had a dream, wherein she fancied she saw one of those fantastic beings, which owe their ideal existence to the delicate imagination of the fair sex. To this dream I owe my happiness! O my dear Chevalier, she is more than mortal. Where shall I begin, how methodize my transports!

ports! what recollections! they steal away my reason, they hurry me out of myself.

I ARRIVED at the castle, about six o'clock; the day had been ragingly hot, but the evening was delightful. I left my carriage and servants a league from thence, that nothing might betray me; I asked for the head gardener, and inquired of him if it were possible to see Madame de Syrcé? He told me that she walked, every evening, in the labyrinth, and that I should certainly find her there. I entreated him to conduct me; and in order to obviate the objections he made, I pretended that I had some papers which were of the utmost importance to her, and which I was not to deliver into any hands but her own. His fidelity remained unshaken by my entreaties; but a purse of twenty louis d'ors got the better of his scruples, and removed all obstacles. He led me to the place he had mentioned, gave me the key, and left me.

JUDGE of the extravagance of my joy—I thought myself transported beneath another sky, and was no more myself;

my eyes ceased to distinguish objects, they sought Madame de Syrcé, only. As I advanced in this Dedalean maze, I felt myself impressed with an involuntary tremor; at length, after many turns and windings, I heard a little sound—I scarcely breathed—What a sight! what a moment! Across a bank of flowers, I perceived her sitting in the grotto, reading a letter, and was near enough to discover that it was one of mine. The Marchioness, who thought herself alone, was dressed in that loose and negligent manner, which is only allowable from a certainty of not being seen; there was an air of softness diffused over all her person; her bosom had no covering but a slight gauze, which Zephyr moved at will. I was in extacy; I devoured her beauties with my eyes; and enraptured by what I saw, I feared to lose the happiness I then possessed, by aiming at more. At length, I became bolder; I entered the porch of the sanctuary, and appeared before the Divinity of it. She uttered a loud scream, on seeing me, and dropped the letter from her trembling hand; her fright was so extreme, that she

remained motionless, without even thinking of repairing the disorder of her dress. —Charming forgetfulness, for which I shall ever be grateful to the God of Love!

FEAR nothing, said I, throwing myself at her feet, I am the lover whom you dreamed of——a lover the most submissive, the most respectful, and most tender, of his sex. I adore you, and am come but to tell you so, and to repeat it a thousand, and a thousand times.—Heavens! said she, with a voice almost extinct, is it an illusion? do I wake? or is it a continuation of my dream?—Yes, yes, replied I, you will know me for a Sylph, by this description. My desires are silent; tho' enflamed by your beauty, they are restrained by my respect.

AT these words, she rose, rushed out of the grotto, and forbade me to follow her. I heard her not, pursued, and stopped her. —How was it possible I should obey! Unhappy woman, said she, where am I? Fly, my Lord, I conjure you, fly! What brought you hither, or what mortal could have

roduced you to this place? Cruel man, do you wish that I should hate and detest you?

AT these words, she sunk pale, and almost motionless, upon the grassy bank to which she had retreated. (*See the FRONTISPIECE.*) Her looks were expressive of terror, but not of aversion. Then seizing one of her hands, which I devoured with kisses; Apprehend nothing, said I, it is not an enemy, who has come to circumvent you, but a lover, who wishes to die at your feet. She trembled, sighed, cast down her lovely eyes; the movement of her breast became more agitated; a shivering paleness seized her lips; I warmed, and reclaimed, their colour, with my kisses.

EVERY thing favoured me:—The parting sun had cast the shade of the grove on our mysterious couch; I was impassioned, and became more importunate. Her terror was mixed with an emotion inexpressibly charming, which, joined to her tender entreaties, served but to redouble my transports.—I could see nothing,

thing, but the object of my wishes; I could hear nothing, but the voice of love. The opportunity, the place, her surprize, the quick throbbing of her heart, the growing twilight, all combined to insure my triumph. I profited of these united advantages; I dared—perhaps, her heart forgave me—I dared every thing. The green shade concealed her blushes; the *Sylph* became a Man, and the Man became an Immortal!

WE must part, too soon. Notwithstanding my efforts to detain her, notwithstanding the entreaties of an happy lover, who, though ardently wishing to be rendered still more so, condemned himself even for his success; notwithstanding the instant of repentance, which in the very crisis of my supreme felicity her despair and grief had forced me to confess; the lovely Syrcé wrested herself from my arms, silent, distracted, and bathed in tears; and to shew the power she still preserved over me, her will, for once, controuled my ardor. I gazed after her, through the obscurity of the night; and though not able

to

to distinguish other objects; I thought I could still discern her angel form.

I NEED not enjoin you to secrecy; I confide myself to you, and you alone in the universe. Oh! my happiness is too lively, too deeply felt, to need the cold and inanimate pleasure of boasting.

ADIEU!

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



